NON-MANUAL WORKPLACE UNIONISM IN THE 1980s

Patterns, Influences and Character

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Abstract

This research, based upon both survey data and case studies at five workplaces over several years, investigates the patterns and character of non-manual unions' workplace organisations and the factors influencing them. The first part of the study, taking manual unions as its point of reference, considers what characteristics of workplace organisations can be identified, why different patterns have developed and how the impact of such organisations can be assessed. In subsequent parts the findings of research in the non-manual sphere are examined. Previous writers on non-manual workers have claimed to perceive major differences between non-manual and manual trade unionism. The assumption being that non-manual workers will have distinctive attitudes towards unions since they have been traditionally regarded as individualistic and anti-trade unionism. This thesis discusses and provides answers to the two main questions arising from the manual/non-manual trade union distinction: firstly, what similarities and differences between non-manual and manual workplace trade unionism can be identified and secondly, how can such similarities and differences be explained ? In marked contrast to the claims that major differences exist, the case studies and survey data demonstrate that non-manual and manual workplace trade unionism is essentially similar.

The research investigates how the organisation of non-manual trade unions at the workplace is equipped to meet the challenges posed by economic recession and technical change. Central to the analysis of union organisation are two key factors. Firstly, the nature and relative importance of its membership. Secondly, the degree to which its organisational structure is developed. These two factors, and their interrelationship, play a significant role in explaining union activity in the workplace. The conclusions reveal weaknesses and shortcomings in non-manual union workplace organisation and suggest ways unions could adapt to meet the challenges of the latter part of the twentieth century.

Tables

Abbreviations

ACTSS	Association of Clerical, Technical and Supervisory Staffs (Section of the TGWU)
AMMA	Assistant Masters and Mistresses Association
APEX	Association of Professional, Executive, Clerical and Computer Staff
ASTMS	Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staffs
AUEW	Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers
COHSE	Confederation of Health Service Employees
CPSA	Civil and Public Services Association
EMA	Engineers and Managers Association
GMBATU	General, Municipal and Boilermakers' Trade Union
IPCS	Institution of Professional Civil Servants
MATSA	Managerial, Administrative, Technical and Supervisory Association (Section of the GMBATU)
NALGO	National Association of Local Government Officers
NUT	National Union of Teachers
POEU	Post Office Engineering Union, now called the National Communications Union
POMSA	Post Office Management Staffs' Association, now called the Communication Managements' Association
RCN	Royal College of Nursing
STE	Society of Telecom Executives
TASS	Technical, Administrative and Supervisory Section (of the AUEW)
TGWU	Transport and General Workers' Union
TSSA	Transport Salaried Staffs' Association
UCW	Union of Communication Workers
USDAW	Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers

Preface

This research describes and explains the development and character of non-manual workplace trade unionism in the 1980s. The view that the economic recession has weakened trade unions has been challenged recently by survey evidence which has shown that manual workplace organisation has survived better than might have been expected (Batstone 1984). The evidence further suggests that the industrial relations literature of the 1970s overstated the extent of shop steward dependence upon management. It argued that from the late 1960s workplace unionism had been successfully 'incorporated' by management, who had encouraged workplace trade unionism. Management had granted 'time-off' to senior stewards, drawn workplace organisation into agreements about establishment level productivity and pay and encouraged stewards to accept the importance of establishment and company 'viability'. In short, trade unionists had been encouraged to share management concerns and to see no further than workplace horizons. The industrial relations literature of the 1970s did not suggest so much that management strategy had been totally successful but more that the tendency to 'incorporate' union organisation had successfully reduced trade unionists' ability to fundamentally challenge management (for a critique see Batstone 1984). Thus any decline in workplace trade union activity in the 1980s could be explained by union dependence

upon management and by management's subsequent withdrawal of support for trade union workplace organisation.

However, this study supports the recent survey evidence of manual workplace unionism and qualifies the theory of incorporation, in the non-manual sphere, by giving practical illustrations of the processes by which workplace organisations have contested management decisions. Clearly the recession has affected trade union bargaining power which, in part, is rooted in tight labour and product markets. Management has been able to exploit this new situation, not so much to eliminate workplace organisation but rather more to reduce its influence. This shift in power towards greater management control has been accompanied by a renewed emphasis upon unilateral management decision-making, in some cases supported by strategies of workforce 'involvement' (ranging from consultative committees to quality circles and workforce ballots) which avoid union negotiation and regulation. However, workplace trade unionism, in this study, shows the potential for challenge which still exists within union organisation even in a hostile climate. The study further addresses one question which industrial relations researchers have not pursued. What type of non-manual workplace organisation is best capable of resisting or affecting management intentions ?

The study is divided into three parts: the analysis of general characteristics of workplace organisations; their specific manifestations in the non-manual sphere; and an examination of factors influencing workplace non-manual trade union character. In Chapter 1 the general attributes of the workplace organisation are identified by analysing the approach and results of previous research into manual workplace industrial relations and linking this to other theoretical approaches. Chapter 2 focusses upon previous research into non-manual unions. Firstly, the changing nature of work, and non-manual workers' attitudes towards, and expectations of, trade unions are discussed. Then their bargaining role, activities and organisation are considered. Chapter 3 is concerned with identifying factors which research has found play a prominent part in influencing workplace organisations. The subsequent chapters are divided into two further parts. Chapter 4 concentrates upon the research focus and methodology. Chapter 5 analyses the empirical data from the 1980 Workplace Industrial Relations Survey. Here the pattern of non-manual workplace organisations is examined in relation to what previous research has found to be the strongest influence upon workplace trade unionism. Chapter 6 concentrates upon the nature of the establishments covered in the five case studies and the pattern of union organisation. The chapters in the third part seek to explain the development and character of workplace trade unionism. Chapter 7 focusses upon the

extent to which collective bargaining arrangements, management industrial relations strategies and technical change affected trade unions in the workplace. A final chapter draws the survey and case study findings together and relates them to the general discussion.

Part I A Framework for Analysis

1 Workplace Industrial Relations in Britain

This chapter is confined to a theoretical and analytical discussion of the research. The need arises from the particular nature of industrial relations research; because of their empiricism and particularism there is a constant danger of research and analysis becoming tied to details of sampling, measurement and empirical 'facts'. There is also evidence that various aspects of workplace industrial relations have become institutionalised into self-contained research objects (see, for example, Industrial Relations Research Unit [IRRU] Reports, 1979-1984). This concerns much of the research into shop stewards, industrial conflict, pay determination, labour turnover and so on. There has been a tendency to ignore conceptual issues and to look for associations between chains of independent and dependent variables (Batstone 1984:32). The aim here is to develop a concept of workplace organisations that can be integrated into empirical research on workplace industrial relations.

In this research the employment relationship through which workers come into contact with each other forms a starting point for the framework. 'The employment relationship is an economic, social and political relationship in which employees provide manual and mental labour in exchange for rewards allotted by employers' (Palmer 1983:3). Within this relationship, containing both market and managerial relations, workers may have similar objective interests.

But their identity of position in the labour market and in the labour process does not, in the real situation of everyday life, create sufficient conditions for a unified awareness and an orientation towards collective action. Different types of individual characteristics and economic, social and political processes work both for and against workers' collectivity. Before the effects and interactions of such processes can be studied there is a need to reach a more qualified picture of workers' collectivity in the workplace than is presently available.

What is required is an integration of conceptual and empirical argument that will help identify particular features of workplace organisations. As a step in that direction an outline of the ideas concerning the nature and goals of workplace organisation is presented and it is related to a specific British tradition of the study of workplace industrial relations. One of the results of empirical research directed towards manufacturing plants has been the variety found in the level of workers' collectivity, from the total lack of it to highly developed systems of institutions and subcultures (see, for example, Lupton 1963; Sykes 1967; Banyon 1973; Nichols and Armstrong 1976; Batstone et al 1977). This points to a need to develop a conception of workers' collectivities which is more advanced than that available in existing formulations. Its characteristics must be both historical and contextual to be able to describe both the stability and the constantly changing nature of workers' collectivities in the workplace. It is at this interface that the relevance of industrial relations research, connected at an

institutional level to the differing historical and structural contents of working life, establishes its significance.

Perspectives on the Study of Workplace Industrial Relations

The study of workplace industrial relations in Britain has resulted from two major influences. The first was related to changes in industrial relations during the 1960s and the second to the 'investments' made by the state in industrial relations research because of the perceived importance of that field. That is, the interest in understanding the nature and functioning of workplace industrial relations was derived from a pragmatic need to produce changes in industrial relations which included direct interventions by the state. This constellation of events also raised an academic interest in the 'problems' of industrial relations and they received wide attention in the media (see Palmer 1983: 186-214). Despite this, however, the term 'workplace industrial relations' has no theoretical coherence; 'the limitations of theory have led to a failure to collect relevant data; that lack of data has, in turn, meant that theoretical notions have been insufficiently subjected to rigorous empirical test. There is, then, a crying need to rectify these weaknesses' (Batstone 1984: 342-43). A preliminary way of identifying such a study is to point out issues which have drawn the attention of governments, employers and academics and become topics of research.

The Flanders frame of reference

In an influential essay Flanders (1965) pointed out how the traditional system of collective bargaining in Britain was experiencing two types of challenge in the mid-1960s. Flanders called these the challenge from below and the challenge from above. The traditional system of collective bargaining was conceived as functioning at the level of different industries between unions and employers' associations on the basis of voluntarily agreed rules. Both challenges appeared to erode this tradition.

In theoretical terms the challenge from below describes a phase of transformation during which the degree of autonomy of the firm and workplace level increases in industrial relations. In the practical British case in the 1960s the challenge from below was identified with such factors as the growth of workplace bargaining and the growing importance of shop stewards. Workplace bargaining was 'largely informal, largely fragmented, largely autonomous' (Donovan 1968: 18). Bargaining was informal 'because of the predominance of unwritten understandings and of custom and practice'. It was fragmented because it was 'conducted in such a way that different groups in the works get different concessions at different times' and it was autonomous because external bargaining procedures were unable to respond to it. Hence the role of the formal system continued to diminish. The three main problems which have been widely discussed were the increasing significance of wage drift, the high level of unofficial strikes and the wide use of restrictive

practices developed by workers to control the use of their labour power (see, for example, Goldthorpe 1974).

These problems were interpreted as meaning both a loss of control by management over what was happening at the shop floor level and a loss of power of the unions with respect to their members while the significance of industry level collective bargaining tended to decline. What became apparent was that trade unions were not monolithic organisations in industrial relations.

These factors were related to the state of the economy during the 1960s. The growth of the gross national product had been continuous and labour markets were characterised by the term 'full employment'. The risk of workers losing their jobs began to diminish, a situation interpreted as increasing the bargaining strength of work groups and their representatives. Management was unable or unwilling to resist the pressure directed at wage increases while it was very often in a position to pass the increases in labour costs on to customers and consumers by raising the prices of products (cf. Hill 1981: 145).

The second challenge to the traditional system of collective bargaining, the one from above, came from attempts to pursue incomes policies. This meant that national wages policy was connected both to the targets of economic growth in the long run and the main immediately important targets of the national economy to secure the balance of payments and to curb inflation. That is,

one of the major policies used to meet these targets was wage restraint. Governments were making interventions in the realm of collective bargaining, which in the British tradition had been considered an area for trade unions and employers to jointly regulate (see Clegg 1979: 306-13; Palmer 1983: 179-85).

Beside their separate effects, both of the challenges were interrelated. Firstly, under industry-wide collective bargaining, firms and plants had considerable autonomy in their industrial relations policies because industry-wide agreements specified only the minimum terms of employment. Under incomes policies there came a growing pressure towards harmonisation of industrial relations policy at the level of enterprises and their sub-units as well. This highlighted further the 'uncontrolled' situation on the shop floor from the managerial viewpoint. Secondly, for union officialdom the local activity of workers might have been less disturbing had the leadership of trade unions not given their support to the incomes policy introduced by the Labour Government. Thus the power of union officials was eroded from below and above leaving them the task of justifying their existence. (One of the first accounts in which this was raised was Cliff and Barker 1966).

Donovan and subsequent pluralist perspectives

One of the responses to the emerging situation was to expand practical industrial relations research so that it could serve as a basis for policy formulation. This government-sponsored research

was very much directed at attempts to 'reform' workplace industrial relations. Several interconnected institutional arrangements provided the context in which the material basis for the expansion of industrial relations research was secured. The first was the Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employers' Associations (1965-1968), commonly referred to as the Donovan Commission. The second was the National Board for Prices and Incomes (NBPI) which was set up in 1965 for monitoring the incomes policies of the Labour Government (see Fels 1972). The third was the establishment of the Industrial Relations Research Unit (IRRU) by the Social Science Research Council at the University of Warwick in 1970. Besides these, several other institutions directly or indirectly promoted industrial relations research, for example, the Commission on Industrial Relations (CIR), the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) and the research activities of the Department of Employment (see Storey 1980: 93,97). These institutional developments meant that industrial relations research was quite closely connected with the state.

The research tradition which has been called workplace industrial relations found its focus for the first time within the research work conducted in connection with the Donovan Commission. This Commission adopted the Flanders type of frame of reference, being influenced by the leading members of the so-called 'Oxford school of industrial relations'. (For characterisations see Wood and Elliot 1977; Gabriel 1978: 334-40; and especially Poole 1984: 47-71. For a critique of the various interpretations of the Commission's

approach to the analysis of industrial relations see Batstone 1984: 3-19).

The research reports published by the Donovan Commission can be divided into two groups. Firstly, there were papers written to give insights into different aspects of workplace industrial relations based upon earlier studies and institutional material. For example, McCarthy (1966) on shop stewards' role, Marsh (1966) on disputes procedures, and Fox (1966) on industrial sociology and industrial relations. Secondly, there were surveys intended to provide some kind of map of the institutional reality of workplace industrial relations. These included Marsh and McCarthy (1968) on disputes procedures, McCarthy and Parker (1968) on shop stewards and work-shop relations, and Munns and McCarthy (1967) on employers' associations.

Thus a new realm of industrial relations studies was explored through the publication of this research material. It is unsurprising that the aspects which became subject to intensive study were on the one hand shop stewards, the principal negotiators at the shop floor on behalf of workers and, on the other hand, the disputes procedures through which the grievances and workers' demands were processed. The central approach of the Commission was the distinction drawn between 'the formal system of industrial relations', referring to the official institutions and the industry-wide collective agreement, and 'the informal system', developed through 'actual behaviour of trade unions and employers'

associations, of managers, shop stewards and workers' (Donovan 1968: 261). This can be seen as another way of formulating the problem identified by Flanders as the challenge from below.

The consolidation of the research tradition of workplace industrial relations occurred through the establishment of the IRRU. A series of monographs and articles have been written as part of various Unit research programmes. Hyman's study (1972) on disputes procedures in engineering substantiated the descriptions of Marsh (1966) and Marsh and McCarthy (1968). Brown's study (1973) on piecework bargaining on the shop floor clarified the role of custom and practice rules in terms of the behaviour of shop stewards and the efficiency of managerial controls. This study was important in demonstrating in practice the substance anticipated by Flanders in his theory of the production of informal rules on the shop floor. Boraston et al (1975) investigated the relationship between trade unions and their members at the workplace; and the studies of Batstone et al (1977 and 1978) detailed shop stewards' behaviour and workers' mobilisation within a single large plant. Terry's paper (1977) reported some results of the potential effects of reforms which had been made along the lines prescribed by the Donovan Commission especially regarding the formalisation of negotiation procedures at the local level.

Whilst the above studies were based upon observation and interview data from the shop floor, research into workplace industrial relations at the IRRU developed a survey approach after this case

study phase. The main results of this have been reported in the study by Brown et al (1978) of different aspects of shop stewards' organisations and in Brown's focus on management's role in workplace industrial relations (1981). In ongoing research this topic is coming increasingly to the forefront (see IRRU 1982, 1983 and 1984).

These studies continued the tradition started by a survey of trade union officers (Clegg et al 1961). During the 1960s several other surveys were conducted besides the Donovan studies, for example, those of Marsh and Coker (1963), Parker (1973 and 1974), Daniel (1976) and more recently Daniel and Millward (1983). These research reports cover only a very small part of the research into different aspects of workplace industrial relations which has been directly or indirectly stimulated by the analysis of the Donovan Commission. This documentation is, however, sufficent to point to the pre-occupation with issues of policy and the lack of ideas and concepts; inadequacies this part of the research will clarify. For there has been surprisingly little discussion on research strategies, theoretical interests and conceptual development in connection with the data base produced by the above and related research. This has led to a danger that the research problems come to be seen in piecemeal fashion, 'characterised by fact-finding and description rather than by theoretical analysis and generalisation' (Bain and Clegg 1974:103).

Within the IRRU research into workplace industrial relations there have been some attempts to review and synthesise the results. The main theoretical or evaluative works have been those of Bain and Clegg (1974), Clegg (1976), Terry (1978), Clegg (1979), and more recently Batstone (1984). (Although when Batstone's work was published he was no longer a researcher at the IRRU, he acknowledges that the work drew heavily upon his time at the Unit). The intention is that this research will lead further in the direction of theoretical analysis.

The study of workplace industrial relations was an important extension of the traditional field of academic industrial relations research. It was one of the reasons for the vigour of British industrial relations research during the 1970s. Another reason was the wide debate on the theoretical foundations of such research (Strauss and Feulle 1978:271-73). By the middle of the 1960s a documented picture of the history and formal aspects of trade unionism and collective bargaining had been reached by academic research, following essentially the tradition founded by the Webbs (see, for example, Flanders and Clegg 1954; Roberts 1956; Clegg et al 1961; Turner 1962; McCarthy 1964; Clegg et al 1964).

The incorporation of the role of the workplace into national industrial relations required a modification of the ideas then predominating in industrial relations research. This was particularly evident in the work of Flanders who argued that the basic social purpose of trade unions was 'job regulation', not as an

end in itself, but as a means to the free development of the individual worker during the course of working life (Flanders 1970:42). The growth of workplace bargaining was thus viewed as a particularly obvious symptom of this concern, but this was not confined to the boundaries of an industry for it implied regulation at a national level as well in order to influence overall levels of employment, greater economic planning and so on (1970:42-47). This notion covered all types of activities which produced rules for regulating different aspects of the employment relationship.

These rules were further divided into procedures and substantive rules. The former concerned those rules which regulate the relationships of different parties in industrial relations; the latter regulated the different rights and obligations related to jobs. Thus with the notion of job regulation it was possible to cover all hierarchical levels and methods of regulation in industrial relations. The traditional field of industrial relations research was concerned with statutory orders and labour legislation, collective bargaining, trade union policies, and other forms of external job regulation from the viewpoint of the workplace; while in the workplace itself relationships between the employer and the employees were regulated very much on the basis of tradition, for example, in the form of custom and practice and precedents.

Another approach to studying industrial relations was adopted in line with the proposal made by Dunlop (1958). The study of industrial relations was described as a study of the institutions of

job regulation. These institutions could now also cover various 'actors' in the workplace including different types of managers, shop stewards and other types of workers' representatives, work groups and other potential collectivities of workers. (For a more detailed analysis see Poole 1984:66-67).

The changes in the focus for industrial relations research had a favourable consequence in that they created links between two research traditions. The first was the study of informal organisations which in the USA was labelled 'plant sociology' following the tradition started by the frequently referred to Hawthorne studies (see, for example, Roethlisberger and Dickson 1939), and mainly involving the problems of restriction of output and the group norms of workers (Dalton 1948; Collins et al 1948; Homans 1950; Roy 1952). The second research tradition was labour economic-based research into the determination of wages at the workplace level. These convergences were helped by the research of Lerner et al (1969) which had already synthesised the two approaches and some of the research at Warwick's IRRU continued the study of the role of comparisons in wage negotiations (Brown and Sisson 1975).

The radical critique

Despite these convergences there have been few outside influences in finding new sources of theoretical and explanatory ideas for describing and explaining different features of workplace industrial

relations. This is partly due to the fact that industrial relations research was stimulated by the pragmatic concerns of industrial relations reforms. Thus the vigour of British industrial relations research cannot be understood without taking into account the theoretical discussions which have had different sources of inspiration.

Firstly, it is necessary to point out the importance of Fox in treating the problems of workplace industrial relations within the tradition of industrial sociology (1971), and developing a distinctive theoretical approach which revealed the weaknesses of pluralist assumptions (1973 and 1974). The pluralist approach, it is argued, rests upon the assumption 'that there is a broad basic agreement' over the organisation of industry, the fundamental distribution of power and control, and the broad objectives of industry. Hence workers who reject such perspectives are labelled by pluralists as 'social undesirables' and thus pluralists are in fact 'performing the function of supporting and justifying the existing order' (Fox 1973:221).

Secondly, radical analysis has questioned the legitimacy of many of the implicit theoretical assumptions of the pluralist perspective. 'For the liberal pluralist the interests of employer and employee do conflict but this does not preclude some form of accommodation' (Batstone 1984:26). Hyman's work has been important in pointing out how a deeper and wider interpretative frame of reference could be introduced; and problems which are lacking in the pluralist

analysis have been tackled by criticising the procedural bias of the job regulation tradition of research (1975 and 1976:32-36). The labour process debate, beginning with Braverman (1974) and followed by many others (for example, Friedman 1977; R. Edwards 1979; Burawoy 1979; Littler 1982; and a number of articles, for collections see Nichols 1980 and Wood 1982), has especially highlighted the importance of job content, its potential variety, and the interdependent managerial strategies for control needed in the transformation of bought labour power into effective capitalist use.

General typologies have been developed characterising managerial strategies in conjunction with firms, industries and labour markets, the content and positions of jobs in the labour process and the nature of state interventions. Seen from this perspective, the discussion of the production of rules without paying attention to various underlying social and historical factors touches only the surface of industrial relations. However, the radical approach to industrial relations varies:

> *in essence, one can differentiate between Marxism and non-Marxism prescriptions. But they do share a common core; namely that a precondition of 'order' is a major transformation in the social structure - the eradication or reduction of structured inequalities. For some - the radical pluralists - there is a deep-seated attachment to the goals aimed at by other pluralists; but, they argue, they cannot be achieved by the relatively marginal reforms proposed by Donovan (Batstone 1984:13).*

Thus, according to the radical critique, the basic weakness in the pluralist analysis is that neither the power relations of classes nor the objective class interests are considered as essential for

the analysis of industrial relations. They are treated only in terms of the bargaining power of different institutionally identified parties and the motives of individuals and groups (Hyman 1975:31; Gabriel 1978:342-44).

The need for a wider theoretical framework

Although the separation of the study of industrial relations from that of the production process has been quite difficult to bridge (see Brecher et al 1978:1-2) it has been even more difficult to link the analysis of workplaces, firms and their industrial relations to the study of the labour process in connection with the state and politics (Burawoy 1981). The assumption of the relative autonomy of the sphere of industrial relations from the economic and political contexts, in the Dunlop tradition, has been criticised, especially since the framework for incomes policies started to gain more 'corporatist' features and became intertwined with the state (see, for example, Panitch 1976 and 1980; Crouch 1977). The need for a wider theoretical frame of reference arises in order to take into account these interconnections of industrial relations. In short, the prevailing conception of workplace industrial relations has emerged from the practical research inspired by the Donovan Commission and the theoretical approach of the pluralists. When evaluating this conception three additional points are worth emphasising.

Firstly, the focus of interaction linking the workplace to national collective bargaining was conceived in research into workplace industrial relations to be the workplace, not the wider and more complex unit of the firm (see Hawkins 1973:40). This accentuates a narrow view of the economic side of workplaces. The neglect of analysis of the firm may be partly due to firms lacking an integrated industrial relations policy. Moreover, senior management has been found to be isolated from industrial relations problems (Winkler 1974; Brown 1981) and the passivity of management in industrial relations was mentioned as one of the reasons for management's partial loss of control on the shop floor during the 1960s (Cuthbert 1973:15-17; Hawkins 1973:44). This neglect of the theory of the firm in industrial relations research (see Gospel 1974) is related to the parallel neglect of research into management (Timperley 1980; Batstone et al 1984; Cressey et al 1985).

Secondly, a theoretical framework of workplace industrial relations is fairly underdeveloped. The main distinctions made concern the divisions into private and public sectors, manual and non-manual workers, and large and small workplaces. Whilst the distinctions have strong explanatory power in workplace industrial relations, the underdeveloped theoretical status of these terms is evident when further questions of an explanatory nature are asked requiring evidence from the underlying process of influencing factors. Significant advances might be made in the study of workplace industrial relations, for example, if the conceptual development and research results attained in research on segmented labour markets

(for example, Doeringer and Piore 1971; R. Edwards et al 1975) could be integrated into the empirical problems of relations between management and workers.

Thirdly, despite the efforts of researchers to fill the gap in knowledge regarding workplace industrial relations most still remain heavily biassed in favour of manual workers. Jones (1977) suggested that a possible explanation was because an assumption was made that the behaviour and influence of workers and their workplace representatives are the same for manual and non-manual. A more likely reason is that many non-manual trade unionists are in public sector employment. Their impact upon industrial relations, therefore, has been thought to be negligible, thus reflecting the pre-occupation characteristic of the Donovan approach that the 'real' problems of industry and industrial relations are to be found in the existence of a powerful shop floor. Since those working on the shop floor were in manual unions it followed that attention was directed at those workers and unions at the expense of non-manual unionists.

Whatever reasons for lack of interest in non-manual workers at the workplace level there is little doubt of the need to restore the balance. Apart from work which centres upon union growth and the extent of union recognition by employers (Bain 1970; Price and Bain 1976; Bain and Price 1980) much of the analysis of non-manual unionism has been sociological in content. That is, it places greater emphasis upon the perceptions such workers have of trade

unionism. However, despite the recognition these studies imply of the growing significance of non-manual workers and their unions, there has been little attempt to examine workplace industrial relations in the non-manual context.

Having outlined some of the gaps in research into workplace industrial relations, it is clear that there is no coherent framework within which the different types of features in industrial relations research can be analysed. Both with regard to the contexts and the historical process there is much to be done in order to describe the reality of workplace industrial relations. Thus the above discussion indicates starting points for creating a new basis for the study of workplace industrial relations.

The research task

Despite the criticisms of pluralist analyses of workplace industrial relations, this research is anchored in that research tradition. The main reason for this connection is that the concept of workers' workplace organisation in these previous research approaches points in a descriptive way to a set of institutional arrangements between workers in the workplace.

In the British context the role of shop stewards has been very important in providing an institutional basis for leadership for individual workers, work groups and occupational groupings (see, for example, Batstone 1984). Also in many workplaces shop stewards

tend to form specific organisations (Brown 1973; Batstone et al 1977; Brown et al 1978). Thus Batstone and his colleagues defined what they called 'domestic organisation' in the following way: 'This term refers not merely to a particular shop steward organisation within a plant but also to the members the shop stewards represent' (1977:3). This definition serves as a starting point for a discussion of the notion of workplace organisation. The merits of the definition provided by Batstone et al are related to the fact that the term 'domestic organisation' is understood at a more aggregate level than that of industrial work groups which are primary groups based on face-to-face interaction in everyday situations.

It is evident that relationships between work groups and shop stewards, among shop stewards themselves, and their links with representatives of management, constitute an important aspect of workers' collectivity. Previous research into workplace industrial relations has made an important contribution to the research on organisational behaviour. 'A number of studies have reflected an interest in the role of workgroups in conditioning the outlook and behaviour of shop stewards.....and the relationship between stewards and the 'member network' has been highlighted' (Poole 1984:139). This has added a new theoretical dimension to the classic accounts of the formation of informal work groups.

In his research into the formation of informal organisations in the workplace, Sayles (1959) stressed the importance of type of technology and different levels of skill with their implied differences in occupational autonomy, differences in status and collective identity. This led to the formation of informal groups which showed wide variety in the methods of securing their interests in their employment relationships. These core ideas of Sayles were also reflected in the list of categories outlined by Hill (1974) in his review of the literature concerning structural factors which encourage or impede the formation of industrial work groups. This list contained four categories: the degree of homogeneity of interests, particularly occupational similarity; the degree of interdependence with others; the degree of control over work processes; the degree of freedom of movement.

What is conspicuous in these categories is the lack of explicit reference to trade unionism and to institutional processes in employer-employee relationships in the workplace. This can partly be seen as an influence of the early 'human relations school' which tended to neglect the role of trade unionism (see, for example, Baritz 1960). However, it should be pointed out that among the classics of the study of workplace industrial relations Kuhn (1961) laid special emphasis upon the role of disputes procedure in the administration of collective bargaining agreements at the workplace and in the formation of collective relationships with management and groups of workers through trade unionism. This neglect can also be understood from the historical viewpoint because significant

changes have occurred, especially during the 1960s and 1970s, in the institutional processes of workplace industrial relations. Thus to a great extent the innovation related to the concept of workplace organisation was a natural reflection of the changing pattern of job regulation, although similar features had been identified earlier in the history of British trade unionism (see Cole 1923; Sykes 1967; Hinton 1973). Therefore a leading hypothesis of the institutional research into workplace industrial relations was that the increasing significance of the challenge from below from shop stewards in the 1960s was a link in a chain relating such features as wage drift, unofficial strikes and restrictive practices to each other.

The approach embedded in the study of workplace organisations has important implications for research into the shop steward which has been treated very much in individualistic terms. It is clear that the insights included in the results during the 1970s extend much of the earlier research on shop stewards (for example, Brown 1973; Batstone et al 1977). The factors influencing the internal process of workplace organisations, connected with shop steward organisations and managerial activities, have been neglected or only partially allowed for in research designs (see, for example, McCarthy 1966; Pedler 1973; Nicholson 1976; Dufty 1981). Similarly, it can be argued that the study of workplace organisations could have interesting implications for research into trade union democracy and management's function in industrial relations. But before such implications can be realised the theoretical content of such organisations must be elaborated.

In order to identify the essential features of workplace organisations which go beyond mere description, it is also necessary to identify their interrelated characteristics. These characteristics must meet two types of criteria. Firstly, their joint effect has to have an explanatory significance in workplace industrial relations. Secondly, the characteristics have to be such that it is possible to distinguish between workplaces where a workplace organisation is functioning and those where it is not.

Assumptions about the nature of workplace organisations create difficulties in their empirical analysis. The social relationships through which such organisations express themselves are not wholly amenable to observation. This is because of their historical dimension. To a great extent, then, the empirical analysis of workplace organisations must occur by studying their overt features and effects.

The Analysis of Workplace Organisation

In the study by Batstone et al (1977) a workplace organisation is conceived to be a system of social networks between individual workers, work groups, shop stewards and their constituency, and relationships between shop stewards. The new feature which is also part of the legitimisation of the workplace organisation is that to some extent these internal relationships among the workers and their collective relationship to management have become increasingly formalised. This includes the formalisation of the

election of shop stewards, their re-election being in practice conditional on the results of bargaining with management, formalisation of the disputes procedure, and the increased use of workplace bargaining.

Such a formalisation process does not, however, mean a suppression of workers' informal networks. On the contrary, it establishes structures around which new networks, norms and positions of influence emerge (Terry 1977). This is particularly the case if the formalisation process has occurred on the initiative of the workers themselves and has not been directly instituted through managerial or outside intervention. (For a discussion of the difficulties in differentiating between worker pressure and management initiative in this process see Batstone 1984:105-18).

In summary, the basic elements in the development of workplace organisations are: elementary networks, their increasing formalisation, and the growth of informal organisation resulting from the formalisation process. At another level the development of these organisations consists of specific events and individual and collective responses to these events. The main task of this section is to give more substance to this outline by identifying three interrelated characteristics of workplace organisations. They concern the institutional process of leadership within workplace organisations, the nature of collective orientation among workers, and the ability to mobilise workers of a workplace to action.

Leadership within workplace organisations

By studying shop stewards; their numbers, elections and tenure, their functions and the distribution of time spent on various tasks, shop steward organisations and their meetings, previous research has been able to reveal important aspects of the nature of the formalisation process of informal organisation, the resulting growth of informality, and the subsequent development of workplace organisations (see, for example, Brown 1973; Batstone et al 1977; Brown et al 1978; Brown 1981; Batstone 1984).

The development of shop stewards since the 1950s in British industrial relations has provided leadership for the otherwise diffuse social networks in the workplace. The existence of leadership clearly brings something new to these networks and can be considered as a necessary condition of workplace organisations. It appears in the form of information exchange, organisational memory, source of authority, and co-ordination of action of workers' representatives, work groups and individual workers.

The study by Batstone et al of the interpersonal processes of leadership in a workplace organisation has provided rich material and some generalisations which specify further the internal structure of leadership. The categories developed include the term 'quasi-elite', different roles of shop stewards, for example, leaders and populists, and an idea of a developed shop steward community.

> *The quasi-elite consists of experienced shop stewards who are in close contact with the convenors and upon whom the convenors rely. They play a major role in decision-making.....for they embody proven expertise, a certain consensus upon the broad nature of trade unionism, and a concern with the maintenance of unity at the level of the domestic organisation (Batstone et al 1977:45-46).*

The system of interaction of those belonging to the quasi-elite forms the dominating chain of influence within a workplace organisation. At a large workplace like the one studied by Batstone and his colleagues it is not, however, a face-to-face group, each member of it interacting with each other. It cannot be considered a self-conscious, coherent and conspiratorial group (1977:46).

The roles of leader and populist can be defined through their different relationships with members, the quasi-elite and representatives of management. Besides, their ideological orientation differs in the degree to which they have internalised the basic principles of trade unionism as a collective endeavour of workers, and the extent to which they are under constant pressure to maintain the unity of action of the workers in the workplace. As to their relationship with the members, the populists adopt the role of delegate, just repeating the opinions and wishes of their constituency and simply acting 'as a channel of communication between members and management' (1977:29). Leaders, in turn, have their own preferences according to which they are ready to take up issues with management. They select the cases brought to them by the members and also the timing of the presentation of their cases

to management. In addition, they raise issues on their own initiative. This process of decision-making and action has developed partly through the individual experience of a shop steward and partly as a result of the experience and advice of the members of the quasi-elite, who have an overall picture of the situation at the whole workplace. Thus the relationship of leaders to their constituency has been characterised as being that of representatives. Though the relationships of the populists and leaders to their constituency differ as to their relative autonomy, the necessity of the support of members is still similar to both types and the source of power of a steward rests in the last instance with them. (There is little agreement upon basic definitions of 'power', but here it is defined as embracing all situations where actions may be altered. For a more detailed discussion see Batstone 1984:20-21; Poole 1984:106-15).

The significance of the leadership of a workplace organisation can be understood very well after the comparison of shop steward types. It is related to the prospect of creating a steward community which influences the way of life of the participants. Populist types of stewards participate only partially in the shop steward community and thus do not share the culture created by it. It is impossible to become a leader steward without participating in this community. It is the support and resources of this community which facilitate the development of the role of a leader. Specific personal characteristics and the support of the constituency are necessary

but insufficient conditions when a quasi-elite has established itself.

Traditions, norms and sanctions, and organisational memory codifying past experience form the basis for stability in a shop steward community. But its culture also contains a dynamic element which is connected with the planning and decision-making of strategic action, with minor adjustments in day-to-day bargaining and in discussions of the experiences gained. Batstone et al convincingly argued that access to this community is a necessary condition for a shop steward to gain a leadership position. Such an argument is grounded in leadership facilitated by the experience and knowledge accumulated within the shop steward community; the core of this being two constantly tested theories, of management and of membership. 'Steward discussion of management can be conveniently divided into two areas. The first of these is a general picture of how management operates, the second is a more detailed kind relating to specific events and managers' (1977:66). Similar aspects of theories of membership can also be identified.

As the resources of the shop steward community are based upon different types of knowledge, interpretations and procedures for action, exclusion from these resources may have serious effects on the career of a shop steward. The norms of the community will have emerged during the evolution of workplace organisation. As the unity of the constituencies represented by the stewards is a necessary condition for the existence of a workplace organisation,

it can be expected that important norms will be related to the problems of unity. The most important values in this respect are those of equity and solidarity. This interrelationship was emphasised in Sykes's study to which Brown refers: 'unity among the members [of the workplace organisation] is vital to their interests, and that unity can be maintained only so long as members subordinate their individuality to the collective decision [of the organisation] and maintain equality among themselves' (Sykes 1967, quoted in Brown 1973:133). The motivation for workers to subordinate their own individuality comes from a wish to support others despite personal sacrifices.

Collective orientation amongst workers

It can be assumed that some kind of collective orientation will exist in a workplace organisation involving all the workers, not just their leaders. Otherwise, elaborate institutional processes of representation and commitment to the norms of unity and solidarity at the level of leadership could not be expected. An idea which can be further developed is that of the workplace consciousness which is referred to by, for example, Beynon (1973), Lane (1974) and Batstone et al (1977).

When specifying the ideological role of leader shop stewards in the plant they studied, Batstone and his colleagues pointed out how these 'consistently foster the collective identity of members in their sections, departments, and the domestic organisation as a

whole. The core of their ideological reaffirmation focusses upon factory consciousness'. This describes a specific type of collective orientation of workers arising from the experiences of shared day-to-day problems in the workplace: 'whilst rooted in larger ideas and principles, this consciousness focusses on the more limited interests of the members with whom [the stewards] are most closely involved, and broadly accepts the dominant structure of society' (1977:249-50). The term 'workplace consciousness' describes the orientation of workers in a very specific way related to the history and day-to-day experiences in the workplace. It is not an individualistic approach to the description of the nature of collective consciousness, but attempts to find a common denominator for the interests of workers at workplace level, on the assumption that this consciousness exists among most workers, including those outside the leadership of a workplace organisation.

In Britain, the most influential approach towards the definition of workers' consciousness appeared in Lockwood's classic paper in which a threefold classification of the social image of the worker was made taking account of the variation in workplace and community milieux that exist within modern urban and industrial populations.

> *These embraced the 'deferential' proletarian image, in which the patterns of social hierarchy were largely legitimised (in small firms and/or small workplaces); the 'traditional' proletarian image, in which a substantial measure of opposition to the social order existed (especially common among geographically segregated communities such as miners, shipyard workers and dockworkers); and finally, the 'pecuniary' image of social differentiation of the 'privatised' worker (the 'prototypical' consciousness of modern mass production industries and heterogeneous urban populations) (Lockwood 1966:250).*

The 'images of society' and the life styles reflected by these types have been studied and analysed further in research by Goldthorpe et al (1968 and 1969) and there has been a lively debate on social imagery (see, for example, Bulmer 1975) and work orientations (Beynon and Blackburn 1972; Russell 1980; Watson 1980). The main concern of those studying worker orientations was to observe how workers related through their attitudes and behaviour to the social environment and patterns of class formation (Poole 1984:175-77).

Ingham (1970) hypothesised that workers with modern privatised, that is economic-instrumental, orientation would prefer to work in small workplaces. As a consequence the differences and apparent similarities of large and small workplaces as to their characteristics of industrial relations, workers' attitudes and behaviour, could be accounted for at least partly through this self-selection and matching process.

Several arguments have been presented against the self-selection hypothesis and the contrast drawn by Ingham between the nature of industrial relations, workers' attitudes and behaviour in large and small plants has been contested on empirical grounds (Curran and Stanworth 1979 and 1981). The controversy over the influences of the characteristics of workplace organisations of different size, and over the effects of the size of workplaces on industrial relations highlights the need to evaluate the workplace or firm as a special focus for action.

Daniel (1973) criticised the Goldthorpe approach by pointing out that workplace orientation is not necessarily a fixed and stable set of attitudes. He argued that, in different contexts, workers frequently had quite different priorities in what was demanded of work, quite different implicit definitions of the nature even of work itself, and quite different definitions of the relationship between management and labour. During the negotiation and implementation process of a productivity agreement the attitudes and priorities of workers shifted strongly according to which issue was having the main impact on day-to-day working life. Such a dynamic aspect in workers' consciousness seems to be especially important in a workplace context.

Because the immediate personal interests of workers are by no means similar, collective orientation must take into account the effects of decision-making, differences in the definition of a situation and in its potential rewards and deprivations (Batstone et al 1978:4; Offe and Wiesenthal 1980:78-79,97). The educating and socialising effects of workplace consciousness appear as individual workers, with their own interests and values, are confronted by alternative interests and values. Immediate working colleagues, elected leaders and informal opinion leaders have considerable significance in this interactive process. A slow socialisation occurs in the day-to-day interaction but a situation of crisis brings a new urgency to the need to negotiate a collective orientation. When such values as solidarity and unity of action have proved their importance in practice and have been established in a workplace organisation, an

individual's freedom of choice becomes limited. The everyday interaction provides ways of supplying group unity through different types of sanctions.

> *It is these informal sanctions of approval and disapproval, popularity and isolation, which are the most pervasive and potent in buttressing group norms and values. When a mass meeting is in progress, for example, it is the group norms and values which are likely to be uppermost in shaping individual behaviour and responses (Fox 1971:119).*

It can be hypothesised that collective consciousness can be understood by knowing how such a process functions in the workplace amongst workers and becomes influenced by similar processes in other workplaces (see Mann 1973:45-54). The existence of workplace organisations is important when explaining the differing responses of isolated workers and those of the collective workplace orientation. An adequate explanation of the relationship between collective orientation and collective organisation will need to draw upon theoretical considerations. Offe and Wiesenthal have distinguished between two types of collective action. In a 'monological' organisation the identification of common interests is not considered to be a problem by the members, whilst in a 'dialogical' organisation the members have to cope constantly with conflicting interests and the constitution allows or even supports such processes (1980:97-98).

The first characteristic of workplace organisations was seen as the development of leadership. The distinction drawn between monological and dialogical organisations helps to specify further

the relationship of the leaders with their constituency in the workplace. Leaders are elected from amongst the workforce and their functioning is subject to controls by the electorate, thus these processes encourage the dialogical nature of workers' interrelationships.

The dynamic, as opposed to the static view of workplace consciousness is further reinforced by the dialogical model. Workplace consciousness could be expected to vary considerably with regard to the focus of issues considered essential in collective bargaining, the degree of involvement of workers in expressing their interests and the scope of issues which can be taken up in discussion. The varying forms of collective bargaining have been approached particularly by making a distinction between wage demands and job control issues. This approach has also been used as an indicator of workers' collective orientation (see, for example, Herding 1972; Clements 1977). Job control issues are considered qualitatively more advanced than wage demands because they are concerned more with structural features in the employment relationship and thus linked to basic questions of social structure. On the other hand, wages are seen as legitimate issues for negotiation and subject to compromises which do not affect managerial authority at the workplace in the same way as job control issues.

The validity of this approach (wage versus job control issues as a reflection of workers' collective orientation) is questionable in

several ways. Firstly, the political connections of wage issues are disregarded when they are treated only as local problems. Under incomes policies, for example, the wider ramifications of wage issues are still more evident. A counter argument could be that these wider ramifications are unrecognised by workers and for that reason the struggle for wages reflects a lower level of consciousness than job control issues. Secondly, job control issues are often by their nature sectional and thus cause problems with workers' unity in workplaces (Herding 1972:347-48). Finally, shifts in workers' demands are especially conditioned by changes in economic and political circumstances, not by changes in workers' consciousness.

Brown (1973:143-45) introduced the idea of levels of bargaining awareness amongst workers. He described the distance of leaders from 'ordinary' workers from the viewpoint of how much workers are aware of the topics and approaches taken in negotiations between the employer and workers' representatives. If ordinary workers have no awareness of what is being negotiated then workplace consciousness cannot be said to exist.

Mobilising workers to collective action

The ability to mobilise the resources of workers is therefore the third essential characteristic of workplace organisations. For without the support provided by the membership of a workplace organisation its leaders can function only as channels of

communication when conflicting interests of the employees and employer are brought to the bargaining table. The resources available to members include their time, energy and potential monetary sacrifices. These resources attain their significance mainly because the members can control and regulate the use of their labour power. Willingness to submit such resources for collective use under a common leadership at the workplace level depends particularly on the nature of collective interests at stake, the nature of interrelations created within a workplace organisation, and wider circumstances.

For workplace organisations to directly mobilise their members, practical goals linked with workers' interests are of great importance. Practical goals which reflect the needs of workers can be considered even more important than overt institutional forms of leadership in the maintenance of workplace organisations. This feature gives these organisations the character of a movement. Thus, although the identification of the characteristics of workplace organisations has been made, a more essential condition for their existence is related to the degree to which they support practical struggles for better terms of employment and the ongoing battle over frontiers of control. In the long-term, this union pressure depends upon the effectiveness of mobilisation for collective action.

The earlier discussion of workplace consciousness has already pointed out some of the internal processes of workplace organisations which contribute to the ability to mobilise members to

collective action. The degree of involvement of members in an organisation's daily activities is of great importance. The deeper the involvement of members the lower is the threshold for mobilisation. With the deepening involvement of members even the difference between day-to-day activities and mobilisations becomes blurred. This difference in the level of involvement can be highlighted with an example from a study contrasting shop steward organisations with the traditions of printing chapels (the name of workplace organisation of printing workers).

> *It would appear that most so-called works organisations in British industry are completely centred around a leader, the shop steward, and the efficiency depends on his ability. The situation in the printing industry is very different. The chapel as an association is of primary importance, the individual officials of secondary importance (Sykes 1967:159, emphasis in the original text).*

The group-centred rather than leader-centred nature of the chapels is symbolised by a rota system under which every member of the chapel takes in turn the duties of chairing the chapel. This also explains why the member chairing meetings exerts none of the direct influence which could be derived from the position.

Batstone et al (1977:112-15) approached the problem of the level of members' involvement in an organisation by assessing the degree to which representation in job regulation is institutionally centralised. It is to be expected that variety in institutional centrality will affect the nature and overt forms of mobilisation. Two 'types' of mobilisation can be constructed.

Firstly, to illustrate the 'nature' of mobilisation two main features may be mentioned. One of them is a majority decision on the mobilisation of workers for industrial action which to a minority is considered to be an inappropriate means of pursuing the generally accepted goal or because the explicit or implicit motives of the action are felt to be unacceptable. Another feature which could be included under the nature of mobilisation is based upon the authoritative position of the leaders of a workplace organisation. Their call to mass action is accepted without asking further grounds for it because earlier mobilisations under their leadership have proved successful and their experience in choosing the course of action is trusted.

Secondly, 'overt' forms of mobilisation are based upon a widely shared awareness of the situation and goals set for the action. The difference between these 'types' of mobilisation can be clarified also with reference to differences in the democratic procedure. The nature of mobilisation is connected with a representative type of democratic procedure whilst the overt forms of mobilisations presuppose a participatory democracy (see Pateman 1970). It is evident that participatory democracy and overt forms of mobilisations are impossible on the basis of relations created in the workplace alone. They become possible to the extent that the workplace organisation is able to reflect not only the reproduction of labour and the relations of members in the workplace, but also the whole life style of members. In that case the workplace organisation is an association whose existence is not restricted to

the representation of interests against the employer (Sykes 1967:154-57).

The way workplace organisations use the mobilisations of members differs depending upon the type of substantive issue, occupational group, internal politics, and labour market situation. Thus, while the two types of mobilisations have plausibility on a theoretical level, they are not very useful in describing practical examples of workplace organisation which can and do use all types of mobilisation. The problem of describing the nature and form of mobilisation, its frequency and extensiveness both in terms of numbers of members and length of time, becomes still more complicated when the more practical forms of collective industrial action are taken into consideration. Strikes have received the most attention in industrial relations research, but following the Donovan Commission other forms of industrial action described under the headings of restrictive practices of job control have also attracted research. These include, for example, unilateral regulation of the level of work effort by workers, overtime bans, work-to-rule, and withdrawal of co-operation. However, very little systematic knowledge is available about these forms of industrial action (P.K. Edwards and Scullion 1982).

From an analytical viewpoint mobilisation resulting from the centralised or co-ordinating leadership of a workplace organisation must be distinguished from fragmented sectional actions. This does not mean, however, that sectional actions do not appear in

workplace organisations. Such action can be related, for example, to the internal politics of these organisations. But the definition of the essential characteristics of workplace organisations contains the assumptions that sectional action in opposition to the leadership is only an addition to mobilisation directed or co-ordinated by the leadership in concert with members.

Internal structure and institutional boundaries

Industrial relations research has traditionally concerned itself with the study of institutions. Thus, the analysis of workplace organisations should be complemented with a more institutions-specific discussion exploring the implications of the analytical model outlined. The implications are concerned with the difference between workplace organisations and lower-level collectivities, their degree of durability, and their relationship with 'wider' trade union organisations.

The first implication deriving from the analysis of workplace organisations is their substantive difference from industrial work groups. The latter are one of those lower-level collectivities through which individual workers relate to informal networks. The sources for the emergence of such collectivities are abundant. Besides the structural factors embedded in the labour process and occupational background, empirical studies have been concerned with social networks based upon age, gender, kinship, language, race and ethnic characteristics, place of birth and current residence,

hobbies, religious and political affiliations, and so on (see, for example, Warner and Low 1947; Dalton 1948; Cunnison 1966).

The second implication concerns the relationship of workplace organisations with spontaneous collectivities such as sectional actions of lower-level collectivities, mass meetings at the workplace, strike committees or even more complex processes of mobilisation of workers such as work-ins. It is quite evident from previous research that workplace organisations are more enduring organisations than the above more-or-less occasional spontaneous outbursts. Such events may be of course important phases of development towards a workplace organisation or in the collective experiences of members of established organisations. A part of workplace consciousness consists of the memory of exceptional events, which are a source of particular myths and points of reference in the process of interpreting everyday events and outlining strategies and tactics for the future in the workplace. This means that workplace organisations are able to maintain their characteristics over a longer period of time; but they must be able to cope with the divergent sectional interests of lower-level collectivities through internal negotiations and the authority of the elected leadership, and established generally accepted norms and procedures.

A third implication of workplace organisations is that although 'stewards now receive more constitutional recognition' (Batstone 1984:103) nonetheless workplace organisations are seldom *formally*

connected with the wider structure of trade unions. The substantive difference between workplace organisations and the wider trade union hierarchy is related to the level of involvement which members feel towards these organisations. A workplace organisation is developed and maintained in the day-to-day interactions as part of the labour process and may even extend to relations after working hours. Wider trade union activities, on the other hand, reach only a very small minority of members. (The low level of participation in the activities of, for example, union branches has been the focus in industrial relations research by Tannebaum and Kahn 1958; and only at exceptional times of crisis is attendance at meetings likely to rise above the level of about ten per cent of the membership). This gap leaves both the need and opportunity to formalise relations between individual workers and work groups by generating a collective representation and leadership. As a result union branches have in some cases lost their status as a place of decision-making, or have never achieved it (Fryer et al 1974; Boraston et al 1975; Clegg 1979). If the local leaders want to consult their members they have to do it during working hours in the workplace. Thus if workers are generally inaccessible in their free-time, for various reasons, the need for a workplace organisation arises.

Other factors which strengthen the separateness of union branch organisation and the informal contacts of workplace organisations are the frequency of industrial relations problems and the experience needed to offer solutions to them. The day-to-day

problems of the workplace cannot always be taken to the more formal arena of general meetings of union branches. Although the substantive difference between workplace organisations and trade union branches has been stressed, the possibility of a merging of the administration of a union branch and a workplace organisation is not a contradiction. It only accentuates the difference in the structure of workplace organisations compared with branches; certain overt institutional characteristics are not essential for the functioning of the former. They are only substitutable for other arrangements.

In previous research, manual workplace organisations have not been analysed as underlying organisations with different characteristics. Rather they have been studied either in terms of shop steward organisations (for example, Brown 1973; Batstone et al 1977; Brown et al 1978) or in terms of the organisational hierarchy of trade unions (Boraston et al 1975; Clegg 1976). The substantive difference of 'workplace trade unionism' from that of the wider trade union has been recognised here and the interrelationships of these have been identified.

In summary it can be said that by analysing workplace organisations and by exploring their institutional implications and boundaries, it has been possible to outline the internal structure of these organisations. Critical points have been raised which have led to modifying previous approaches by stressing the need to separate the

essential characteristics of workplace organisations from their historical contexts.

Theoretical assumptions and methodological implications

The concern of much previous research has been to increase the understanding of the structure and functioning of institutions representing workers' interests in workplace industrial relations. This has led to detailed descriptive studies. An underlying theoretical assumption has been, however, that at some unspecified point the formalisation and growth of workers' informal networks will gain an independent significance; not only at workplace level but also through their aggregate effects in national industrial relations, with regard to development of wage increases, occupational wage differentials, and shifts in different levels of bargaining.

This approach has been related to a theoretical assumption that it is the workers themselves who can acquire a strategic position in this development by exploiting economic and political events. By analysing workplace organisations through networks their emergent character is emphasised; in the last instance the most basic element of those organisations becomes day-to-day interaction. Through empirical research it has been possible to demonstrate how the network of actions can be co-ordinated so that a cumulative process occurs: workers start to negotiate, on a continuing basis, a common set of interests under a leadership which ensures the possibility of

using available resources by bearing in mind a variety of factors which may hinder or favour the workers' cause. Such processes have been found to be characterised by norms and values which promote workers' unity and solidarity. In organisation theory the extent to which management can influence the structuring of organisations regarding the division of labour and processes of co-ordination and control, has been called management's strategic choice (Child 1972; Montanari 1979). By analogy it can be said that the possibility of the development of a workplace organisation is a result of a cumulative set of strategic choices by the workers.

When describing cases where the possibility of strategic choices has been realised by workers, previous research has concentrated upon those examples which are exceptional in their organisational sophistication (see, for example, Batstone et al 1977:14). The Donovan Surveys have been criticised for being biassed towards engineering industry which has been well-known for its high level of workplace bargaining and sophisticated organisational procedures for workers' representation (Lindop 1979:13-14). In this chapter the methodological approach to workplace organisations has been further advanced theoretically by outlining their three essential characteristics.

The theoretical relevance of such a distinction is based upon a view that it may be fruitful to concentrate research on exceptionally well developed cases in the study of workers' organisations in the workplace. Under such empirical conditions various features of

workplace industrial relations have been developed to a point where their interrelationships have become clearly identifiable. Although these interrelationships are different or completely missing in other conditions a well developed case study provides categories which can also identify inaction and non-existence in other cases (Winkler 1974:193).

By postulating the quality of durability in workplace organisations it is possible to accomplish research in one area of workers' organisations and their influence in the workplace. This entails aspiring to generalisations capable of explanation and prediction. The research by Clegg (1976) into workplace industrial relations has been quite explicit on this point. Durability of workplace organisations makes it possible to discover what were the key influences for the development of these organisations. In the area of industrial relations the approach to the development of workplace organisations must be able to combine their essential characteristics with more particular features. For this reason it is necessary to analyse workplace organisations through both specific institutional processes and with more general characteristics of trade union action in mind.

Conclusions

In order to understand the phenomenon which Flanders (1965) called 'the challenge from below', the purpose of this chapter has been to analyse the essential characteristics of workplace organisations and

outline a focus for a research programme on them. The approach selected was to analyse the ideas and results of previous research into workplace industrial relations and expand it in the direction of a new research programme on non-manual trade union workplace organisations.

Observations of the growing importance of shop stewards in workplace industrial relations were the starting point of this research. Where research results on shop stewards have been collected it has been recognised that in many cases shop steward behaviour cannot be understood without reference to the whole system of workers' representation in the workplace and different internal status, norms and values within a representative community.

The growth and maintenance of workers' representation is directly related to the question of whether leadership can be provided for them in their relationships with management and the wider trade union. When this representation acquires an actual leadership function, workers' actions cannot be understood or predicted by knowing the attitudes of individuals and workgroups. On a day-to-day basis the workplace is a source of a common experience for workers. But the development of the kind of collective orientation of workers which requires a feeling of organisational unity built independently of the employer by employees themselves is a long evolutionary process. Linked with a norm of solidarity between different constituencies of representatives such a collective identity is called workplace consciousness in this research.

Although it is evident that procedures for representation at workplace level contribute to consciousness amongst workers only the practice of collective action is a proof of its existence. The mobilisation of the resources of individual workers is one of the few means through which they can restrict the domination of management when confronted with conflicting interests.

In this research, therefore, the development and maintenance of leadership function, workplace consciousness, and the ability to mobilise workers in a workplace to collective action, are called workplace organisation: they constitute the essential characteristics of these organisations.

2 Non-Manual Trade Unionism

The picture emerging from the previous chapter is that the decade between the mid 1960s and 1970s saw industrial relations research in Britain directed at issues concerned with the workplace: specifically, attention was paid to shop stewards and their activities. However, despite the considerable efforts of researchers in the last two decades to fill the gaps in knowledge on workplace trade unionism, most of the work has been heavily biassed in favour of manual unions. As Clegg acknowledged 'the Royal Commission surveys covered neither white-collar unions nor the dealings between management and white-collar representatives' (1976:296-97). Goodman and Whittingham went some way to redress the balance in their study of shop stewards. But even here their main concern was limited to the 'nature of the instructions and advice given to stewards by the different unions' rulebooks' (1969:46). There was little attempt to go beyond the printed word to see whether the rulebook reflected reality.

This lack of interest in the work of representatives in non-manual unions may be due to several reasons. It may be that researchers have assumed the activities and functions of a shop steward to be the same whether a member of a manual or non-manual union. Or that much of non-manual unionism is found in public sector employment (Bain 1985) and consequently its impact upon industrial relations is negligible. But perhaps it reflects a pre-occupation with industrial relations 'problems', which was so characteristic of

the 'Clegg-Flanders' approach. That is, focussing almost exclusively upon what they regarded as the real problems of British industry and industrial relations, namely a powerful shop-floor. Since those who worked on the shop-floor were in manual unions it followed that their concern was directed at these workers and their unions at the expense of non-manual unions.

Whatever the reasons for the lack of interest in the activities of non-manual workplace organisations, there can be little doubt of the need to restore the balance. As Bain (1985) indicated, non-manual workers constitute more than half of the total labour force in Britain. Yet despite the enormous growth rate in non-manual trade unionism in the 1970s and the consequent increase in the density of non-manual organisation, the study of workplace organisation in these unions has so far largely been ignored. With the exception of studies by Batstone (1977) and Nicholson (1981) and their colleagues, the major features of non-manual trade union activity at workplace level have not been examined in detail. Instead attention has focussed on three main topics: conditions for expansion of non-manual unions, reasons why non-manual workers join unions, and attitudes of non-manual workers towards unions. That is, research has placed greater emphasis upon the perception of such workers toward trade unionism. The implicit assumption being that non-manual workers have distinctive attitudes toward unions since they have been traditionally regarded as individualistic and anti-trade unionism.

While such studies have recognised the growing significance of non-manual workers and their unions, there has been little attempt to discover how well developed non-manual organisation is in the workplace, how much bargaining takes place, the range of issues and depth of bargaining and how far the workplace organisation relies upon the full-time official and the wider union organisation. Nevertheless, it is in this area of union behaviour that some writers have argued that differences between manual and non-manual unions can be delineated (for example, Boraston et al 1975; Clegg 1979).

The aim of this chapter is to review the approaches to and results from research into non-manual trade unionism. The focus is upon the changing nature of work, the meaning of unionism for non-manual workers, collective bargaining and trade union activity and organisation. The analysis centres upon five key questions. What have been the effects of recent changes in the nature of work ? What is the relationship between the work situation and workers' attitudes to unions ? Do non-manual members have different expectations of their workplace organisations than their manual counterparts ? To what extent in non-manual unions does bargaining take place, and what are the range of issues ? How do non-manual workers behave as members of workplace organisations ?

In addition to reviewing ideas already advanced to describe and explain non-manual unionism a more fruitful analytical approach is suggested. Research into this area at an *aggregate level* increased

substantially in the 1970s. This increased activity, however, has done little to clarify the issues at a *local level*. While studies have often added to the list of causal factors, the continued reference to sociological and industrial relations approaches only serves to complicate the issue.

Crompton (1976:407), for example, argued that two dominant approaches exist in the analysis of non-manual trade unionism. The sociological approach, which relates patterns of non-manual unions to the class situation of non-manual workers; and the industrial relations critique which rejects the association of class situation and union activity and argues instead that job regulation is the crucial independent variable. But with changes taking place in the nature of work, are non-manual workers' interests opposed to those of manual workers or convergent with them ? And how far does this distinction between the sociological and industrial relations approaches extend to the relationship between the work situation and workers' attitudes to unions ? For this feature is 'of major significance in exploring the similarities and differences between [non-manual and manual] workers' (Price 1983:178). Moreover, do non-manual members have different expectations of their workplace organisations than manual workers ? Unless expressions of attitudes really indicate the way people behave, analysis of attitudes is not particularly helpful for understanding the basis of trade union activity by non-manual workers. The first part of this chapter examines these questions. In the second part, by systematic analysis of the remaining central questions about

bargaining, union activity and organisation and the significance of new technology, further progress is made towards developing a framework for the study of non-manual workplace trade unionism.

The Changing Nature of Work

In the early 1960s the study of occupational change focussed upon the increasing automation of industrial processes. The analysis suggested that, as technology increased in complexity, semi-skilled manual work would decline and 'knowledge'-related non-manual professional, technical and clerical work would increase (Kerr et al 1961; Bell 1974). Current forms of interest in the nature of work stem from Braverman (1974). He replaced this strong technological deterministic presentation with an approach which placed emphasis upon the class-related nature of technology and work organisation. Essentially Braverman's thesis was that there had been a general and progressive deskilling of jobs in the twentieth century; that there was a long-term trend for jobs to be increasingly routinised and mechanical. Linking the organisation of work to class analysis, he argued that the working class had become increasingly homogenous.

Non-manual work had traditionally been regarded as different from manual work in that it was supposedly characterised by intellectual rather than manual activities; highly developed social relations and easy contacts between colleagues and with management; a relatively high level of qualification; a certain freedom in the organisation

and performance of work; and prospects for occupational and social mobility. The work of an office employee was thus different in several respects from that of a factory worker. However, the growth of large offices, technical change and the reduction in the gap between the remuneration of non-manual and manual workers have gradually blurred this distinction (ILO 1980).

Of course, any notion of a rigid demarcation between mental and manual work is arbitrary. Bain and Price (1972) offered a definition of non-manual employment as the 'possession of, or proximity to, authority'. Otherwise, it has tended to indicate some form of 'professional' competence or intellectual skills (Johnson 1972). To stress the importance of the division between manual and non-manual is normally to insist that 'the.....expansion in clerical, technical and supervisory occupations entails that the working class.....has declined' (Hyman 1983:15).

In the last decade, in a period when non-manual workers constituted more than half of the total labour force in Britain (Bain 1985), the debate on the nature of work has centred upon workers' experience of the content of their work and the social nature of relations at work. The former includes the deskilling debate, worker knowledge and their creative potential; the latter covers managerial domination and an accompanying 'class struggle'. Because of their influence upon discussions about the nature of work, the insights and limitations of Braverman's thesis are summarised in the first part

of this section. The following part will review their implications in the context of recent changes in the nature of non-manual work.

The content of work and work relations

While there has been widespread acceptance of Braverman's overall deskilling thesis, criticism has tended to concentrate upon its 'uni-directional' nature. Thus Elger (1979) argued that in place of this one-sided analysis should come an awareness of the complexity and reversibility of the deskilling process, specifically based upon an acknowledgement of worker resistance. The role of worker resistance is seen as central in two ways: as playing an integral part in the development of the labour process and as obstructing the overall move towards deskilling. Thus, in contrast to the argument that craft workers through struggle managed to retain a formal status for their skills, Elger claimed that 'they were transformed and encapsulated within modern industry in ways which sustained significant forms of expertise' (1979:74).

It is clear that worker response and resistance do play an integral part both in the overall development of the labour process and in its everyday management and organisation. But in acknowledging this, the crucial question remains as to what this resistance is about. For Elger it was clearly about deskilling; that is, about the content, and possibly the status, of types of work. At the same time he saw the rationale of the deskilling process not in relation to the technology involved and its potential for increased

productivity, but as a strategy for weakening organised worker resistance (although to what is unspecified). The emphasis upon skill as a key focus of worker resistance is sustained in the criticism of Braverman's imputation of 'a switch from thorough going craft controls to pervasive capitalist direction of the labour process' and for failing to appreciate 'the manner in which forms of specialised expertise and craft competence may be embedded with a complex structure of collective labour' (Elger 1979:63).

It can be argued that such processes do occur, but that they are not central to the pattern of worker resistance and managerial decision-making. In contrast to Elger's argument, craft workers, while opposed to the erosion of their skills, will tend to undergo a process of struggle in which, while some attempt is made to preserve the content of their jobs, the emphasis will be upon retaining some privileged aspects of pay, security, and so on, which accompany skilled work. Even more clearly, a rationale for de-skilling which must surely be taken into account is the necessity to increase the productivity of labour and thereby profitability.

Thus 'scientific management', which the critics of Braverman have seen almost entirely as a strategy of control in the sense of domination and suppression of the workforce, must also be examined in its own terms as a technique for reconstructing the organisation of work. The importance of the labour process debate on deskilling is that the issues can be examined together, relating the nature of work, workers' resistance to changes in the organisation, and

managerial strategies aimed at weakening this resistance by further changing such organisation.

From another viewpoint, Cressey and MacInnes (1980) focussed upon what they saw as a key contradiction within labour processes, the repression and subordination of workers' knowledge and creativity through hierarchical and power-centred structures. Thus while workers are dominated and oppressed within the labour process, the knowledge, motivation and creativity possessed by these workers is continually called upon. This constitutes a central contradiction. 'It is precisely because capital must surrender the use of its means of production to labour that capital must to some degree seek a co-operative relationship with it..... The two-fold nature of the relationship of capital to labour in the workplace implies directly contradictory strategies for both labour and capital' (1980:14). Storey (1983) located a similar fundamental contradiction centred upon the content of work. He suggested that 'control structures and strategies typically contrast their own inherent contradiction. Braverman implies deskilling is almost an objective in itself. Yet.....capital requires labour to continue the cycle of production' (1983:8).

In the emphasis of both Cressey and MacInnes and Storey upon the creative potential of workers there is an implicit contrast between capitalism and some other, more ideal, system which would be able to actively employ this potential. Yet the acknowledgement of central contradictions in the area of the content of work, methods,

expertise, creative initiative, indicates a significant absence within the labour process debate. If the organisation and content of work is seen as revolving around worker resistance, which in its turn centres upon aspects of the labour process, there is no way of understanding the basis of existing worker antagonisms which surface within the enterprise. Without denying the importance of workers' subjective experience of the content of work, it is the contention of this thesis that economic issues centering upon the struggle to maintain and improve living standards form the major focus of worker resistance in their position as sellers of labour power.

It is significant that many writers within the labour process debate have interpreted the development and impact of capitalism in terms of political domination which, they argue, is countervailed by worker resistance against this political repression. This almost exclusive focus upon the 'social' aspects of the capital-labour relation at the point of production is examined in the next part of the argument.

Littler and Salaman (1982) illustrated this concern with work relations, the second focus of analysis in the labour process debate, in their complaint that 'throughout Braverman's analysis there runs a highly mechanistic, deterministic strain whereby relationships, once established as necessary, are regarded as satisfactorily understood and explained. Braverman is not interested.....in questions of how these theoretically required relationships are actually organised and structured in practice' (1982:251). The point

is also emphasised (in fact pre-dated) by the arguments of R. Edwards (1978) who declared that 'whereas Braverman concerned himself primarily with the technical aspects of the development of the labour process, technical in the sense of workers' relations *to* the physical process of production, my analysis will focus upon the developing relations *of* production at the point of production' (1978:110).

From the subsequent argument of Edwards, it is clear that it was the issue of control (simple, technical and bureaucratic) that he had in mind. However, in the same way that the concept of control is highly ambivalent, the recommendation to explore work relations appears based upon an elision whereby the relations of production are changed into relationships in the sense of the interaction between groups at the workplace. It is unquestionable that both the technology and the patterns of command and conflict within labour processes are bound up with the mode of production and ensuing relations of production within which work takes place. In this sense the nature of work inevitably contains 'social' relations. But these social-production relations should not be reduced to the level of aspects of social interaction surrounding purely 'power' relationships at work. Issues such as exploitation and the structuring of work towards profit defined targets should be taken into account when discussing the nature of work.

To present relations within the labour process in terms of overt political processes is to allow no scope for the conception of any

relationship between the economic resistance which exists within the labour process and a challenge to just those overall relations of production which are placed foremost on the agenda by Burawoy (1979 and 1985) and other writers. Rather, political awareness of 'class consciousness' is left as something which will emerge, Athene-like, from the minds of workers who suddenly apprehend that what they have been 'reproducing' all this time is not the firm's product, but the relations of production.

A similar view of the possibility, or necessity, of workers somehow achieving a fully-fledged 'class consciousness' was effectively examined by Moorehouse (1978) in his critique of the typologies of Goldthorpe et al (1968), Mann (1970) and Giddens (1973). For Goldthorpe and his colleagues, class consciousness required an awareness of similar situations and interests, a definition of these interests as in fundamental conflict with those of another class, and a conception of class as permeating the totality of existing social relations and as crucially determining the future social order. Mann expected class identity, class opposition, class totality and 'an alternative'; and Giddens required class identity, conflict consciousness and revolutionary consciousness.

These three or four-fold categorisations of the 'conditions' for class consciousness appear to present a model of such ideological purity that only the most determined workers could hope to reach it. Any notion of a wider consciousness as attainable is missing from this perspective, which isolates 'class consciousness' from that of workers' own everyday struggles. As Moorehouse remarked:

> *The first point to make about all these elegant constructions is the emphasis put upon intellectual understanding as an apparently necessary precondition for all radical action. Secondly,.....they seem to assume that all or a majority of the working class should attain 'revolutionary consciousness' or 'grasp the alternatives' before any action is possible (1976:471).*

And yet the relationship between consciousness and action is clearly an interactive one in which experience forms 'theory' and *vice versa*. So what is it that begins this process, that provides the catalyst which may force workers, if only for a time, out of their 'pragmatic acceptance' and at least raise the question of a challenge to the existing structure ? Time and again illustrations of unrest in the labour process show that struggles are initiated by the contradictions within capitalism which have their daily material impact upon workers' lives. To the credit of Goldthorpe and his colleagues, 'real events' did cause them to reconsider their original conclusions.

A practical illustration of this crucial point of contradiction is afforded by the shop stewards in the study by Edwards and Scullion (1982). While the stewards fully accepted the managerial goal of production, their own actions in defence of their members continually undermined that goal. 'There was.....an unconscious form of resistance whereby stewards' everyday practices challenged managerial rights in many ways even though their articulated ideology involved commitment to the same aim of producing large

numbers of high-quality products' (1982:198). Thus the acceptance of managerial norms, like the agreement with broad areas of class ideology, does not imply a coherent course of action in tune with such conceptions.

In summary, the first part of this section has argued that worker resistance in the labour process is motivated by economic considerations rather than the demand for control and that such economic action, far from being 'incorporatist', has challenging implications. Such resistance, moreover, is not the result of an explicit class ideology but of the impact of contradictions in the labour process.

For class analysis begins by seeing inequalities as leading to variations in individual or group experiences. Individuals react, positively or negatively, to these experiences. Thus their future behaviour depends upon their understanding of their experiences. However, their understanding is likely to be firmly bound within limits; emphasis upon trade unionism involves seeing this as a strategy pursued, or at least desired, by individuals as a means of changing an undesirable situation. But forms of behaviour should not be seen only in terms of their individual consequences. For example, promotion can be seen at one level as a strategy to change the individual's situation, but at another as part of a process which constitutes a reproducing system. This has important implications for the process of struggle, in terms of its creation of ideas, experience and organisation. The first is that 'battles'

by workers cannot be and are not 'fought' only on the grounds of ideas. Organisation is a crucial dimension in this development of consciousness and organisation cannot be built around ideas alone; it has to have some practical target. The second implication relates to what has to be recognised as the outcome of most such struggles in terms of accommodation and compromise. Workers' struggles built workers' organisations and these have not been concerned to challenge the 'capitalist system'. Yet in the process of struggle they continue to create their own interpretations of the world of work. These implications in turn are important in the context of recent developments in the non-manual labour process.

Changes in non-manual work

Goldthorpe and his colleagues (1966 and 1968) stressed that the labour market was an important mechanism for allocating workers with particular orientations. They argued that there would be a relatively high degree of homogeneity within an enterprise, and also that, for example with respect to assembly-line work, apparent deprivations will not necessarily be of significance to the individual worker. However, Blackburn and Mann (1979) illustrated that the labour market allows very little scope for choice for manual workers in accordance with orientations. But homogeneity has been shown to be important to those within the work situation. Similarity of work provides a basis for cohesion, even more interdependence, since a group is actually created by the formal organisation of the job and is maintained through constant

interaction. Group stability and a low rate of membership turnover provide further conditions encouraging homogeneity (Lupton 1963; Cunnison 1966). Thus certain conditions in the work situation encourage collective behaviour. The work of Scott et al (1956) and Sayles (1959) made clear that those factors which encourage group cohesiveness - stability of membership, technology and occupational identity - also encourage participation in trade union activity. Spinrad (1960) concluded that the major factors encouraging participation by union activists were homogeneity of interests and communications within a group. This finding, which is supported by several of the other works referred to, is a central one for the argument here: that organised, collective action is most likely to occur among those groups which, while they experience dissatisfaction with their work situation, have the necessary conditions for such action.

From the 1950s onwards then, evidence for the importance of shared interests and communications came from skilled manual workers. Lockwood (1958) also emphasised technological changes which had not only decreased the intrinsic rewards available to clerical workers, but also increased their homogeneity. He argued further that there had been an accompanying decline in opportunities for promotion, the legitimate strategy of change, and that this was a further reason for the move towards collective organisation and action.

Since Lockwood's contribution the nature of work has fundamentally changed and one of the most significant changes in clerical work

has been in work organisation and the division of labour. The work of the clerk is often very limited in the use of discretion over methods and over organisational resources. There has been a division of clerks into those capable of answering enquiries and those processing routine activities (see, for example, Crompton and Jones 1984; Webster 1986). In their examples, technical change (combined with organisation and product changes) had resulted in deskilling but was also leading to skill polarisation. Among technical workers, it was largely the nature of the technology which resulted in fundamental changes in the relationships between workers, tools, equipment and the product, but technology was also polarising the workforce in terms of skill (Rose and Jones 1985).

A recent widely reported consequence of technical change therefore is the tendency to polarise skilled workers (who are knowledgeable of the process and product and who make decisions) and unskilled workers (who process information and work to a set routine). This tendency has been identified particularly in clerical work and is facilitated by technical change because it often eliminates arithmetical calculations which were previously part of the clerical process (see Crompton and Jones 1984; Wainwright and Francis 1984). Two types of work then result: feeding the computer with information and making decisions based upon that information.

Thus a process of division according to functions is occurring and this specialisation seems to encourage task fragmentation. Crompton and Jones (1984) also found that many clerical jobs were very

narrow in range and discretion. It is now unusual for a clerk to see a whole process through from beginning to end and without knowledge of the whole process the chance of learning enough to be promoted is reduced. Moreover, when clerical work involved processing large amounts of paper it was easier for clerks to control the process and more difficult for management to gain access. Control over labour and other organisational resources has therefore increased.

In some clerical work, but more often in technical work, new technology appears to have the effect of changing the nature of the relationship between workers, tools, equipment and the product. In work which involves interaction with mechanical machinery, the worker can see, hear and feel the parts move. Electronic technology, by embodying complex mental functions and working according to non-visual operations reduces the directness of this relationship and creates a barrier between workers, their actions and the product (see, for example, Cockburn 1983). This leads to a reduction in tacit skills involved in interaction with machinery, for the new equipment is harder to work by 'feel' and intuition. Gorz (1982) argued that while some jobs may become 'intellectualised', requiring mental rather than manual operations, conceptual rather than perceptual knowledge, many of these jobs neither stimulate nor satisfy intellectual capacities, requiring concentration simply to avoid errors.

Weir (1977) argued that in clerical work, while 'batch' systems associated with the first phase of computerisation reduce skill, the development of 'on-line' interaction systems may increase it. Crompton and Jones (1984) were sceptical of this and suggested that in clerical and technical work the reverse might be the case. On-line systems may further the automation of arithmetical functions and increase access to information and simplify procedure. While first phase computer technology eliminated many book-keeping functions, it also made access to information more difficult; indeed in some cases more so than previous manual filing and sorting systems. Clerks had to use printouts and because of delays in processing, information was often out of date. With the on-line computer access is immediate and it becomes feasible for the clerk to feed in information and figures to be processed with no delay. Ability to manipulate information is increased and although this can increase skill, work of this nature is usually performed by management.

A similar process may be identified in technical work, where first phase computer technology increases complexity of operation but feed-back and manipulation of information is poor. With more sophisticated electronic technology procedures are simpler, mistakes harder to make and information is easy to manipulate. An example of this was found in the empirical research in this study in telephone exchange maintenance where the electronic system had a greater self-diagnostic facility and was more easily maintained than the preceding electro-mechanical system. Again this capacity for

manipulation may compensate for loss of skills if it does not become a managerial task. However, technical change encourages a division between routine processing of information and use of that information, and if, as Braverman argued, concern should be with the distribution of skill, technical change may be seen to encourage its already uneven nature.

In summary, technical change is usually seen as resulting in a loss of jobs and deskilling of labour. However, technology can both threaten and provide new opportunities for workers. The types of skills associated with clerks and administrative workers predominantly involve the use and manipulation of information in a variety of ways and in certain instances a degree of personal responsibility and discretion. But it is in the area of clerical work that technologies are likely to have a predominantly substitutive effect upon labour input by allowing the automatic processing of information traditionally performed manually. Machinery has allowed work to be more intensive than was the case with traditional clerical work and so has achieved the maximum use of the capital equipment. The changed work organisation has resulted in the deskilling of the word processor operator compared with the traditional clerical worker, since the job has become one of essentially typing and no longer contains more varied administrative roles. Although the growth in technical occupations has been occurring for many years, some commentators have argued that micro-electronics will give an additional impetus for this

development through the 1980s. But the development of technologies has also resulted in a polarisation within technical work.

'Control' over the pace of work and the physical working environment cannot be totally isolated from skills, since highly skilled jobs have traditionally been able to attract rather better working conditions than lower skilled jobs. Nevertheless, technology can be seen to have an impact upon working conditions independent of its effects upon skills. Firstly, the increased specialisation reduces the variety of work and increases the possibility for management control over the pace of work. Secondly, the possibility of human contact is reduced and social isolation at work and work intensity are increased.

Therefore, is the class position of non-manual workers becoming more similar to that of manual workers ? This thesis has been advanced by a number of writers (for example, Crompton and Jones 1984). In order to answer this question of proletarianisation Lockwood (1958) differentiated between status, work and market situations as distinct components of class, while Giddens (1973) stressed the difficulty of constructing any general theory of non-manual labour. A different thesis to that of Lockwood was advanced by Braverman (1974) and Carchedi (1975). They suggested that in order to understand the political significance of some forms of non-manual work it is necessary to examine the way certain workers come to perform 'proletarian' work tasks to the exclusion of other sets of tasks. Braverman's account was a preliminary explanation of the

work situation of 'middle layers of employment'. Carchedi provided a far more detailed and systematic examination of these 'middle class' workers.

These two writers examined the work done by non-manual workers in terms of a dichotomy between control and labour. Each assumed that tasks performed by non-manual workers can be disaggregated so that it is possible to identify workers who perform tasks of control, those who perform tasks of labour and those who undertake both sets of tasks. Braverman, for example, identified 'middle layers of employment' as an area where workers perform tasks of 'command', 'hired labour', or both. Similarly, Carchedi advanced the thesis that the 'new middle class' could, in part, be distinguished in terms of control and surveillance, and tasks of labour. He suggested that as the performance of tasks of labour becomes disaggregated, that is, as the performance of these tasks becomes more pronounced, the degree to which workers undertake tasks of control and surveillance proportionately declines. Eventually the result will be a proletarianised workforce (in particular see Carchedi 1975:59-68).

More recently, in a contribution to the process of linking theoretical with 'real world' developments, Armstrong (1986) described how supervisors had been 'proletarianised' judged by the conventional indices of this process: income, work content, work organisation and personal autonomy. But, he argued, this proletarianisation of condition could not be taken as synonymous with a changed place in class relations, no matter how much it was

resented. The distinction being drawn (and which clearly has a wider relevance to the analysis of non-manual and manual relationships in the workplace) is between a loss of autonomy *within* the control function of capital and exclusion *from* the control function as a whole. Armstrong's view was that their position within the control function of capital is the most important influence upon their conception of their work and their relationships with the workforce. Their nominal ambiguity of function is, in a sense, resolved in favour of capital since they see themselves as having to demonstrate their value to management on a day-to-day basis in the extraction of surplus value. Their role in the organisation of production is central to their self-conception and to the judgements which they see being made about them. This brings them into direct conflict with the workforce. In the same publication Smith (1986) described the development of technical work which takes the argument a stage further, showing a growing identity between technical work and the control functions of capital, as craft origins have been diffused by changing methods of entry into technical occupations and a growing diversity of technical functions.

Thus the difference between workers who perform tasks of control and those who perform tasks of labour is more complex than the theorisations of class structure associated with Braverman and Carchedi would suggest. A further account would include consideration of the following dichotomous relationships: producer - non-producer, exploited - non-exploited, labourer - non-labourer, and

owner - non-owner. Furthermore, both Braverman and Carchedi presented an uni-dimensional view of relations associated with the nature of work. Each based his theory upon the possibility that tasks undertaken by non-manual workers can be socially disaggregated. Carchedi in particular suggested that as this disaggregation proceeded then the 'proletarianised' sector of the non-manual workforce would be in a position to act in concert, as a collectivity, to further their proletarian interests.

With regard to the organisation of work, this is a misleading view. Carchedi seemed unaware of the different forms that control can take. He failed to recognise that the control of work activity can be complemented by the control over the production process. Moreover, both Braverman and Carchedi failed to recognise that certain non-manual work is typified by a fusion of work-tasks rather than disaggregation. It is precisely because of this fusion of tasks that non-manual workers are able to act as a collectivity in the form of contemporary trade unionism.

Non-Manual Unionism

As stated in the introduction to this chapter, in the attempt to understand the nature of non-manual unionism, the lines of debate have been drawn between the sociological approach (for example, Crompton 1976; Crompton and Jones 1984) and the arguments advanced by industrial relations writers especially Bain (1970) and Bain, Coates and Ellis (1973).

Briefly, the sociological approach accounts for non-manual unionism by reference to a decline in the class position of non-manual workers as a consequence of firstly, the weakening of their proximity to authority (management) through job routinisation, the development of bureaucratic hierarchies and the decline of promotion opportunities in their work situation, and secondly, a decline in their labour market position especially relative to that of manual workers. Lockwood (1958) regarded work situation and market position as two major dimensions of class position and, together with level of status in society 'as a whole', as the principal determinants of class consciousness. He argued that variations in the degree of unionisation among clerks could be accounted for by variations in the work situations of different clerical groups, while variations in the 'character' of clerical unionism (in the sense of their degree of identification with the labour movement as a whole) could be ascribed to variations in the market positions of clerical groups.

Others, notably Blackburn (1967) and Roberts et al (1972), have followed Lockwood in the view that work situation and market position are important factors in explaining union behaviour. Roberts and his colleagues in a study of industrial technicians referred to their declining market position relative to that of manual workers, the frustration of their hopes for upward occupational mobility, threats to their job security, increasing bureaucratic distancing from management and a decline in status relative to manual workers, as factors all contributing to increases in unionisation and in (albeit reluctant) 'militant' behaviour

(collective action aimed at improving conditions rather than individual competition).

In the view of Loveridge (1982), the effect of these developments could be subject to a 'cultural lag'. Non-manual workers could continue to believe that their jobs were important and their position privileged for some time after they had ceased to be so. Unionisation or militant action could then result from a sudden 'clarification' of the real situation; for example, if senior management were to substitute or deskill their work.

In his study of the unionisation of bank clerks, Blackburn formalised (and further developed) Lockwood's concept of union character by introducing a seven factor index of 'unionateness' which was essentially a measure of the similarity or otherwise of non-manual unions to a popular stereotype of their manual counterparts. A union was described as more or less unionate 'according to the extent to which it is a whole-hearted trade union, identifying with the labour movement and willing to use all the powers of the movement' (1967:18). Hence, higher unionateness involved instrumentality, with emphasis on securing members' protection, adequate conditions and rewards of employment, collective representation, plus ideological commitment to the labour movement and a militant pursuit of interests perceived to conflict with those of management. Blackburn argued that non-manual unionism is differentiated from manual unionism by character. The degree of unionateness measured the character of the union and was

considered to provide an 'index of class consciousness' and a 'measure of potential for class action'.

Bain (1970) specifically took issue with much of the earlier work on non-manual unions, claiming that there was no significant relationship between aggregate non-manual union growth and blocked promotion or proximity to manual workers. Nor did union 'image' and recruiting policies affect non-manual union growth. Instead Bain concluded that the growth of non-manual unionism could be explained by employment concentration, union recognition policies by employers and government action to promote union recognition. In so far as recognition of unionism depends upon a degree of density of membership having already been achieved, employment concentration appears to be the crucial independent variable in Bain's model. Employment concentration diminishes the influence which non-manual workers possess over job regulation such that individual workers find that they have 'less ability to influence the making and administration of the rules by which they are governed on the job' (1970:188).

They join trade unions and engage in collective bargaining in order to rectify this situation. Bain claimed to find no evidence for an association between non-manual unionism and other aspects of the work situation, and none with aspects of market situation. He also appeared to have concluded that the market and work situation indicators of class position are of little or no account because evidence was not forthcoming to demonstrate that they were. In an

under-researched field this was a hasty and potentially misleading position to adopt.

In her research of technical and supervisory workers Ellis (1971) found that at an individual level there was some degree of association between people's views of the class structure and their attitudes towards unionism. This was particularly the case at the extremes so that, for example, union members in situations of low density union membership were particularly likely to hold a view critical of the existing class structure, and to perceive it as containing fundamentally conflicting interests and relationships. However, in her conclusion, Ellis foreshadowed the argument jointly developed in Bain, Coates and Ellis (1973), that union membership and growth *per se* cannot be explained by reference to workers' perception of class, but only by structural factors such as employment concentration, by catalytic issues that provide the immediate motivation to organise, and by technical and political conditions favourable for organisation into a union.

Ellis's research suggests that there is some association between the attitudes of individual workers towards unionism and their perceptions of social class. Developing this theme, Bain, Coates and Ellis (1973) surmised that workers' perceptions of their social and class reality may shape their individual and collective behaviour, and hence play a part in determining the character of the union of which they are members. In particular, class perceptions may be associated to some extent with the rationale which workers attach to their union membership.

To return to the distinction which Lockwood made between factors associated primarily with variation in degree of unionisation and factors associated primarily with variation in union character and rationales for membership, if this distinction is accepted then the areas of disagreement between 'sociological' and 'industrial relations' schools are greatly reduced. Members of both schools tend to account for the degree of unionisation by reference to structural aspects of the work situation, to political conditions favourable for union recognition, and to specific issues such as threatened redundancy which act locally as a spur to unionisation.

In fact, much speculation about the nature of non-manual unionism has revolved around this distinction between the degree of unionisation, which in some non-manual occupations matches that in manual occupations (Bain and Price 1983), and the character of non-manual unionism, especially in terms of the motives of members which may include a strong desire to preserve an advantageous position *vis-á-vis* manual occupations. However, even if the character of a high density non-manual union is quite distinct from that of a manual union, some ambiguity towards that union could remain in its members' minds if they continue to identify with managerial interests and objectives against which their union will be drawn into conflict. The debate on the connection between social stratification and non-manual unionism took a new turn with the work of Crompton (1976).

She argued that some non-manual workers will experience ambiguity about trade unionism because their work role incorporates both

labour functions, such as co-ordinating the supply of raw materials and tools, and capitalist functions, such as acting as the front line of managerial authority. Unambiguously proletarian occupations perform the function of producing surplus value whereas occupations which form part of the 'global function of capital' perform the functions of extracting surplus value from the proletariat, of realising it in the market place or of distributing it between capitals.

> *This intermediate position gives rise to considerable variations in the class situations of different [non-manual] groups, reflecting the variation in relationships between particular.....occupational groups and the capitalist mode of production. These variations in turn give rise to a range of attitudes and patterns of behaviour, particularly in respect of collective representation, which reflect the ambiguity of their class situation (Price 1983:168).*

Crompton attempted to demonstrate this thesis in the case of technicians and clerical workers, arguing that the class situation of both groups had become less ambiguous as capitalist economies have developed. But while this had generally increased their propensity to organise collectivity, the strategies of representation had been very different. Focussing upon clerical and administrative work Crompton and Jones (1984) developed this theme to argue that the class position of non-manual workers cannot be understood without consideration of the role of females in the social and technical division of labour. Their view was firmly grounded in a theory of the development of advanced capitalism, from which they concluded that computer-related deskilling has continued the 'proletarianisation' of clerical work. Clerks, they concluded, at last are now proletarians.

In this writer's view, if it is accepted that it is unnecessary to assume an association between proletarianisation and unionisation (which is in any case disputed by the majority of authors in the field), the Crompton and Jones hypothesis can be restated in the form that unionisation may be a response to firstly, the replacement of capital by labour functions and secondly, the loss of autonomy within the functions of capital. In other words, the first process creates among non-manual workers interests substantially in common with those of the manual workforce. However, the second process creates conflicts of interest between the different groups who vie for the privilege of carrying out the control functions of capital (see, for example, Armstrong 1986:126-29). To the extent, therefore, that these considerations can be shown to contribute towards non-manual unionism, they create the potential for action against manual unions as well as against sections of management. There is no substantial area of disagreement between Crompton and Jones, and those whose ideas they criticise, Bain et al, Blackburn and Lockwood. Their view is that non-manual unions are indeed 'different' from manual unions. But the industrial relations context of these differences is not examined by Crompton and her colleague.

Expectations of Workplace Unionism

Turning to the third question, non-manual workers' expectations of workplace unionism, Ellis (1971) maintained that latent collective interests, based upon structural conditions, are unlikely to develop into manifest collective interests without the presence of some

catalytic issues which prove a focus for mobilising union membership. In her research, Ellis found that the threat of redundancy and the negotiation of 'staff status' agreements by manual workers were examples of issues which mobilised supervisors into joining a union.

Roberts et al also made the distinction between 'basic factors' stimulating trade union development 'which are to be found in the context of economic and social change' (1972:324), and the reasons why a particular occupational group in a particular establishment becomes unionised. They found in their study of technicians that the presence among a dissatisfied group of a nucleus of 'card-carriers', who had an ideological or normative commitment to the union, was an essential prerequisite of organisation. The process of expansion in union membership from such a nucleus could be precipitated by management actions which brought home the technicians' exposed market position.

Consideration of specific industrial relations contexts in which trade unionism takes place may provide an analytical link between study of the variations in attitudes and behaviour of non-manual and manual workplace trade unions. The two central issues are whether firstly, lost influence and autonomy plays a significant role in non-manual workplace trade unionism and secondly, if it does, whether non-manual unionists are concerned to restore a differential in relation to manual workers.

On the first point, at least at the aggregate level, it is firmly established in the literature reviewed above, that bureaucratisation has played a substantial role in non-manual unionism. While some of this process might have involved the replacement of capital functions by the extra work of co-ordination necessary in an increasingly complex division of labour, many writers agree that much of it is still concerned with the more routine aspects of controlling labour in the interests of capital (see, for example, R. Edwards 1979; Crompton and Reid 1982).

There is also literature bearing on the second point, whether as in the view of Bain et al (1973), the goals and methods of non-manual unions are essentially similar to their manual counterparts. While this may be so, again at the aggregate level, it does not preclude the possibilities of more local divergences of aims and methods, still less of differences in the 'demands' made on their unions by non-manual and manual union members, especially in view of the observation made by Bain and his colleagues (1973:159) that union character is not simply a reflection of the predisposition of the membership.

Of course a concern to maintain differentials is by no means peculiar to non-manual unions. However, the conclusion of Roberts et al (1972) that non-manual unionism signifies a determination to stay ahead of manual workers rather than solidarity with them, indicates a more broadly based antagonism and a more fundamental cleavage than, say, the kind of occupational factionalism observed among shipbuilding unions by Brown et al (1972).

What is lacking in this connection is data on the meaning which non-manual workers attach to their differentials. While for Jenkins and Sherman (1979) they are justified by 'self-investment' in education and training, for Wright (1979) they also represent a 'return to control' in which case the concern of non-manual workers over the narrowing of their differentials represents more than the normal factionalism of trade unions, and more than disappointed 'self-investors'. It relates closely to the devaluation of their role within the control function of capital. In the absence of firm evidence, however, all that can be claimed is that the issue of differentials, if it is pursued locally by non-manual unionists, is consistent with their loss of influence within the control function.

However, it is worth restating the comment of Bain et al (1973:159) that there may be, for a variety of reasons, a gulf between the policies of non-manual unions and the concerns of their membership. The finding of Nicholson et al (1981:142) that the views of NALGO workplace representatives were more similar to those of manual shop stewards than to those of their own membership suggests that a gulf may exist even at a local level. This allows a speculation that non-manual workplace trade unionism may pass through the same developmental process that has already been claimed for manual unions by Batstone et al (1977).

Collective Bargaining Activity

Bain et al (1973:158) suggested that a useful starting point to test the hypothesis of a polarisation between non-manual and manual

union behaviour is to concentrate upon trade union participation in job regulation. Workplace organisations do not, of course, all have the same scope to negotiate: clearly much depends upon the structure of collective bargaining. In the private sector there has been a general trend away from industry-wide bargaining but there are still wide variations between different industries within this sector (Daniel and Millward 1983:181). In the public sector, by contrast, there is a long tradition of comprehensive bargaining at national level, leaving only interpretative issues and certain 'domestic' arrangements for local negotiation. But even here there are considerable variations within and between, for instance, a government department, a local authority and a nationalised industry. The size of the employment unit is important. A large public undertaking is likely to have some discretion in the application of nationally agreed terms and conditions; thus there probably will be some scope for domestic, local or regional bargaining.

Clegg (1979) referred to the paucity of empirical inquiries into workplace bargaining by non-manual unions. He concluded that the reason for this neglect was the belief that little workplace bargaining was done by non-manual unions; furthermore, when such bargaining occurred it was conducted by full-time officials. While this may have been the case for non-manual unions in the public sector, Clegg noted that there were signs of differences from this in private manufacturing industry (1979:10-12).

The data on levels of pay bargaining derived from the 1980 Workplace Industrial Relations Survey tend to support Clegg's generalisations. A striking feature was that the pay of non-manual workers was less likely than that of manual groups to be the subject of collective bargaining and where the pay of non-manual workers was jointly regulated, negotiations were more likely to be centralised (Daniel and Millward 1983:177). However, the contrast between manual and non-manual groups was more marked in the private sector. A point to emphasise here is that these data were only for negotiations over pay. This point is particularly important because different issues are often negotiated at quite different levels by the one organisation. The level at which pensions, for example, are negotiated in a company may well be quite different from the level at which they conduct their pay negotiations. Nonetheless, it does enable some confident generalisations to be made about collective bargaining among non-manual unionists.

Workplace representative involvement in workplace bargaining

Firstly, there is less collective bargaining over pay among non-manual than among manual workers. Secondly, it is certain that non-manual pay is less affected by industry agreements than is the pay of manual workers. Most employers' associations in manufacturing do not negotiate with unions representing non-manual workers; and although the largest of them, the Engineering Employers' Federation, recognises the unions, it no longer negotiates minimum pay scales but leaves this to companies and plants.

Thirdly, the company or the division is the most important level of non-manual pay bargaining in the private sector and the national level the most important in the public sector (Daniel and Millward 1983:177-83).

Even where non-manual pay is settled at the workplace, is the degree of representative involvement likely to be less than that of manual shop stewards ? One of the few studies of non-manual bargaining in the workplace reported that 'the leadership is often assumed by the full-time officials' who 'tend to be involved not merely in the actual making of decisions, but also more frequently in the definition of problems'. On the shop-floor, in contrast, 'the conveners tend to play a more central role in decisions and are also more able to control the involvement of full-time officials in the formulation of problems' (Batstone et al 1977:211).

Naturally, when an issue goes through to the external procedure, the union official is called in. Indeed, some of the transcripts of meetings in Batstone's study revealed that the full-time official during negotiations played a far more dominant role. But involvement of the full-time official only became apparent after domestic procedures had been exhausted. So who bargains for the unions during this stage ? As already indicated there is a whole range of issues about which the unions may bargain. It is only when these issues cannot be resolved at a particular level that the negotiating committees of unions become involved as the issue proceeds through the higher stages of procedure (see Nicholson et al 1981).

Where trade unions have joint negotiating rights they may join forces for any bargaining on issues which affect all non-manual workers irrespective of union membership. In such circumstances representatives from each union will probably constitute the negotiating committee. But where there is a collective issue which relates to only one of the unions, or an individual grievance is taken up on behalf of a union member, then each union will be represented by one or more representative along with the individual concerned. Where an issue affects the union as a whole at a workplace, the union may utilise their elected committee. However, where the issue affects only a particular group, for example, clerks or technicians, then representatives of each group may act on behalf of their members in negotiations. Again where the problem is an individual one the group representatives will be accompanied by the worker concerned.

The result of such arrangements will mean that the branch secretary plays more of a full-time official's role, acting as a link between the various negotiating groups and offering advice and assistance. Thus, to some extent, the branch secretary, like the full-time official, is regarded as an outsider which, in turn, reinforces the independence of each group.

The overall impression gained from the Batstone and Nicholson studies suggests that non-manual representatives are very much involved in domestic bargaining. Each union had, by and large, its own negotiating team which, so far as it was able, handled workplace bargaining. In the Nicholson study the representatives did not

want, nor did they expect, the personal involvement of the full-time official in all their local negotiations. Although, clearly, the availability of the full-time official is of crucial importance here; a point which will be discussed later. Nevertheless, the picture emerging from the discussion in this section suggests to a large extent that like the manual shop steward, the non-manual representative may play a central role in workplace negotiations and develop a considerable degree of self-reliance in dealings with management.

The scope of workplace bargaining: substantive issues

Having considered to what extent bargaining takes place and who does the bargaining domestically, the discussion now turns to look at the range of issues that may be the subject of bargaining. Inevitably, of course, there are variations in what is settled in workplace negotiations. Nevertheless, on substantive issues some common ground can be established. As referred to above, pay determination is likely to be first and foremost the most important issue to affect all unions. Obviously, during certain periods, for example, in an economic recession, unions may be limited in what they negotiate. Consequently, in order to undertake any serious analysis of pay determination it is important to discover just what is negotiated during various periods of collective bargaining.

For example, in some circumstances there may be no agreed grading structure although a company does operate one of its own. This grading structure could be linked to a 'wage for age' scale which

was subject to a previous national agreement. Thus at a certain age and over a minimum and maximum scale operates. Since the union do not recognise the company's grading structure they could enter negotiations on a settlement basis, that is, an across-the-board payment for all of their members irrespective of ability, experience and age. They do not concern themselves with the age adjustments within each grade.

Another example is where unions operate on a different basis, such as a jointly agreed pay structure maintaining the differentials between grades by claiming percentage increases. Within a third example, the situation becomes more complex because each grade negotiates its own pay claim. Moreover, some groups will have negotiations on pay-related issues, for example, overtime shift allowances, 'on-call' allowances and so on.

The point to emphasise is that it does not necessarily follow that wherever national or company agreements are 'loose', domestic bargaining flourishes and workplace organisations are well-developed and autonomous. Boraston et al (1975:77) found that workplace organisations in building, footwear and hosiery were highly dependent upon the union despite industry agreements allowing a wide scope for workplace bargaining. Conversely, there was some evidence to suggest that within the limits imposed by 'tight' agreements, workplace organisations may achieve considerable autonomy. The 'tightness' of nationally determined pay and the 'looseness' of workplace bargaining is largely a difference between the public and private sectors of the economy and this difference

may help to account for the extent of domestic pay bargaining by non-manual representatives.

Remuneration is, of course, not the only issue with which trade unions concern themselves. Conditions of service also figure prominently in non-manual bargaining although in the public sector these are usually dealt with at a national level. However, even here, agreements on issues such as hours of work and holiday entitlements are quite likely to be administered at workplace level. The extent of bargaining on substantive issues, so far as public sector unions are concerned, may be limited to a narrow range of issues. But private sector unions may have local agreements ranging from a new grading structure to a 'clocking-in' exemption agreement. As they are not tied by a highly centralised system of collective bargaining unlike most of their counterparts in the public sector, have these unions taken advantage of the wider scope for bargaining ? The evidence from the case studies in Chapters 6 suggests that they have.

Ad hoc issues

Substantive issues may make up only a small proportion of the total number of issues bargained about. Obviously because the principal concern of most workers is their pay, the actual time spent on those negotiations probably exceeds that on other issues. Nevertheless, this does not mean that *ad hoc* bargaining is unimportant simply because it is only a one-off issue or relates only to one individual. Such issues may have wider implications not just for other union

members but for the company too. The subject matter of *ad hoc* bargaining can vary enormously and it is not intended here to catalogue the vast number of issues which may be raised at various times. Rather, to briefly give some examples of issues which could be raised specifically in the context of non-manual employment.

Such issues for clerical workers encompass the use of calculators and their effect on the job security of comptometer operators to company practice of filling adult internal vacancies with junior clerical staff. The union representing clerical workers may regard the latter as particularly important since it means that in time the company could argue that the job should be down-graded. But equally important it could reduce the range of promotion opportunities for clerical workers.

Another issue to affect mainly clerical workers is the introduction of visual display units (VDUs). Not only does this mean that clerical workers are expected to become more specialised with the introduction of technical equipment; but there is the possibility of a reduction in workers required as the new equipment can remove a good deal of the work previously done by some sections of staff (see, for example, Smith 1985a).

Within a union representing ancillary workers, for example, industrial nurses, chauffeurs, security staff, workplace representatives may get involved in negotiating such issues as coverage for meal breaks for nurses, clothing allowances for chauffeurs and uniform entitlements for security staff. A further

example is where a union covering computer staff seeks an agreement with the employer on the use of contract workers. The representatives may argue, if contract workers are used regularly, that the company should review staffing levels generally within the computing area.

There are, then, a whole range of issues which may be the subject of bargaining on an *ad hoc* basis for the local union representatives in a workplace. These two sections on substantive and *ad hoc* bargaining illustrate that the scope of workplace bargaining can extend beyond the narrow confines of remuneration and is as much concerned about jobs as determining what the annual pay increase will be. Furthermore, such examples of collective bargaining activity suggest that there may be similarities, rather than differences, between non-manual and manual unions.

Thus even when agreements are the subject of bargaining only outside of the workplace, there may be many issues which require continual servicing by the unions either on a formal or informal basis. For example, in the public sector where about ninety per cent of workers are subject to agreements which lay down standard conditions of service and rates of pay for a whole service or nationalised industry, health and safety, discipline, transfers, introduction of new equipment and staffing levels and overtime are some of the most common issues handled by public sector workplace representatives (Daniel and Millward 1983:197-99). Moreover, standardised rates of pay in the public sector do not prevent workplace negotiators from seeking to exercise a degree of control

over their members' earnings. Overtime is worked by some non-manual workers and the volume and distribution of overtime are negotiated in the workplace just as they are in manual occupations. According to the 1980 survey, promotion and grading are at the top of the list of pay-related issues settled between non-manual workplace representatives and managers. The evidence from this survey suggests that not only is the range of issues over which bargaining takes place extremely wide; it shows too, that like their counterparts in manual unions, non-manual workplace representatives are equally concerned about employment issues and so bargain over staffing levels, job security and the implications of introducing more technical and sophisticated equipment.

The conclusions which can be drawn from this section on collective bargaining activities and in particular bargaining on *ad hoc* issues are twofold. Firstly, while for some workplace negotiators certain areas of the employment relationship are outside their scope, such as pay in the public sector and promotions in the private sector, there are many other areas which are regarded as both legitimate and negotiable issues. Secondly, an image of workplace non-manual unions as concerning themselves solely with administering agreements must be questioned. There are important issues, such as security of employment, staffing levels and so on, which the union workplace representatives may see as their legitimate concern. Increasingly in the 1980s, redundancy is not just a threat which manual workers have to face. Thus unionists at the workplace have found that they must widen the scope of their interests to include areas which have been left, in the past, to management fiat.

Workplace Trade Union Activity

The extent to which workers make use of their bargaining power and the extent to which they are prepared to create further opportunities through trade union activities depends upon their orientations and the extent to which these are consistent with their employment situation. Non-work factors, such as domestic responsibilities and social ties serve to shape workers' work-related goals and their views on the legitimacy of collective action (see, for example, Goldthorpe et al 1968; Rubery et al 1984). But as already indicated, factors within the work situation also shape worker expectations. For example, social interaction with working colleagues and the operation of work group norms influence worker views (for example, Batstone et al 1975). In addition, as has been increasingly recognised in discussions of labour control strategies, employers also seek to shape the attitudes of workers both through a variety of involvement techniques as well as by career structures and payment systems (R. Edwards 1979). However, the structures under which workers operate may also foster certain attitudes. For example, as Fox (1974) argued, detailed control over workers implies that they are not to be trusted. They may therefore reciprocate by demonstrating low trust in management. Finally, unions may affect worker attitudes. Indeed, an important aspect of strong union organisation is the education of members into certain principles and perspectives (see, for example, Batstone et al 1977 and 1978).

However, worker readiness to employ collective means to pursue their interests is not only dependent upon the particular pattern of

expectations, or perceived interests, which they hold but also the extent to which they are met. Hence, for example, while manual workers may, in general terms, be more ready than non-manual workers to resort to collective action, it is quite possible that the latter actually demonstrate a higher level of strike action. This may arise simply because the expectations which they have developed are not being met by employers while those of manual workers are. Moreover, the experience of collective action may serve to shape expectations and orientations.

One indicator of members' orientations which is of relevance in this context is union density. The higher the proportion of workers who are union members the greater is the likelihood that workers will act collectively. However, it should be remembered that collective sanctions are not confined to unionised workers; nor are all union members equally ready to engage in such action (see, for example, Blackburn 1967). As noted above, traditionally it has been argued that manual workers are more collectively orientated than non-manual workers. The same has in the past been thought to be true of men as compared with women; and full-timers as compared with part-timers. However, these patterns may have become less marked with changes in absolute and relative pay levels, job security and broader changes in the organisation of work and patterns of labour control.

Union structure and strategy

It has been observed at a number of points in the preceding discussion that trade unions can affect the influence of workers and their expectations and perspectives. However, it is equally the case that the nature of the membership affects the nature of trade unions. This is most clearly the case in terms of union structure. The early patterns of trade union organisations reflected the goals of their founders. For example, those committed to a class-based definition of worker interests sought to develop broad-based, open forms of union organisation. In contrast, those who defined their interests in craft terms set up exclusive organisations, confining membership to the relevant craft. While a great deal of change has occurred in union organisations subsequently, the nature of change has been very much affected by the previous union structure. Hence, as Turner argued, 'the character of organisations is very much a product of their ancestry and the circumstances of their early growth' (1962:14). Unions, then, are products of their past and agents of their future. It follows that their futures are to a degree shaped by their past.

The concern in this thesis, however, is less with the historical development of non-manual trade unions than with how they are confronting the current situation. To a significant extent, therefore, union structure can be taken as given: how structure affects union influence and strategy can then be looked at. Two key dimensions of union structure can be distinguished for this purpose: the nature of union membership and organisational

development. These two dimensions are discussed in general terms first and then their application to different aspects of union organisation is examined.

The nature of a union's membership, or its potential membership, it is argued, affects the way in which a union defines members' interests. The nature of a trade union can be further divided into two aspects: firstly, the proportion of a workforce which the union has in membership or aspires to have as members, its relative size, and secondly, the particular nature of that membership.

The importance of the relative size of a union can be best explained in Olson's terms (1983), although similar arguments are common in industrial relations, for example, in the context of debates on multi-unionism. A union which represents all workers within an employment unit is likely to adopt a rather different perspective to one representing only a small, specific group. The reason for this is as follows: any union demand, if successful, provides gains for its members but may also impose costs upon the workforce more generally. A union representing a small, sectional group will alone obtain the gains from its actions but may incur only a small proportion of the costs of its action. On the other hand, an all-encompassing union: that is, one which represents all workers, will not only achieve all of the gains of its actions but also all of its costs. It therefore follows that it will tend to take a broader perspective than a more sectional organisation (1983:23).

If this argument is correct, then it follows that all-encompassing organisations are more likely to concern themselves with a wider range of issues and, in particular, with the general nature of employer strategy: that is, factors which serve to shape more immediate aspects of the wage-effort bargaining. Less inclusive organisations are not only less concerned with such issues, but also, to the extent that they are, see them very much through their own sectional perspective. The precise nature of that perspective depends upon the sorts of groups covered by the union.

To argue that more inclusive organisations adopt a wider perspective is not, however, to suggest that they necessarily adopt a more co-operative approach. There is no *a priori* reason to believe that a wider definition of member interests leads to incorporation. In some cases it may do so, but in others it is possible that an all-encompassing organisation will pose a greater challenge to employers than more sectional organisations. The precise approach adopted by any union is likely to reflect both the nature of the membership and the strategies adopted by employers.

The second aspect of the nature of union membership which is of relevance to an understanding of union behaviour concerns the precise nature of the membership it represents. In addition to the personal characteristics of members, the sorts of occupations it covers and their relationship to the production process is likely to be of particular relevance. Given the nature of this research, the focus can usefully be here upon a crude division between, on the one hand, clerical and administrative workers and, on the other,

technicians in both production and maintenance areas. Cross-cutting these variations is the further variation of public or private sector employment. Compared with unions covering clerical and administrative workers, technicians have traditionally placed particular emphasis upon the protection of the 'craft'. This has meant seeking to control the supply of labour into a particular job territory and maintaining skill levels in other ways, such as ensuring adequate training. Clerical and administrative unions have traditionally exercised less widespread control over issues relating to work organisation and even pay. This is because, traditionally, individualistic means of pursuing interests have been more available to their members. To a large extent, therefore, the role of the union has been concerned with preserving the relative status of members and protecting the operation of the career structure.

The importance of the distinction between the private and public sectors was mentioned in the preceding discussion. If unions in classic areas of the public sector such as central and local government are compared with those in parts of the private sector which are relatively independent of the state as a controller or buyer of goods and services, then their logics of action are significantly different. Ultimately, union power depends upon the ability to damage the employers' interests. This means, in the private sector, that union power rests ultimately upon the ability to damage profits; in the public sector it means the ability to damage the political credibility of the government (for a fuller discussion of this point, see Batstone et al 1984).

In brief, it has been argued that two aspects of the nature of union membership are important for an understanding of union activity: relative size or inclusiveness, and the precise nature of the membership represented. In practice, there is often a relationship between these two variables. All inclusive unions, for example, will by definition include all types of worker within any employment unit. Those representing technicians, particularly maintenance technicians, will generally be smaller and less inclusive than those representing less skilled clerical workers. However, there can clearly be exceptions to this general pattern due to the particular mix of occupations within an employment unit.

The strategy and influence of a trade union is not merely shaped by the nature of its membership, but also by its development. By this is meant its internal organisational arrangements and resources. In order to effectively pursue members' interests, a union has to be able to undertake three things: firstly, it has to be able to identify and permit the expression of different interests; secondly, it has to have mechanisms which permit the collation and reconciliation of different interests; and thirdly, it requires resources not only to define members' interests but also, given these, to formulate coherent and effective strategies which take into account the context within which the union finds itself.

Unless differing interests can be expressed and thereby taken into account it is unlikely that union strategy will optimally reflect members' interests. It is likely, for example, that particular groups will systematically suffer relative to those who can more

easily express their views. This may not only mean that costs are imposed upon the former, but also that the union becomes weakened. Those whose interests remain unrepresented may be forced to resort to 'unconstitutional' means to pursue their special interests within the union; or they may quit, possibly joining another union or seeking to form a breakaway organisation (see, for example, Lerner 1961; Hirschman 1970; Hemingway 1978). At the least, the disadvantaged groups may become increasingly apathetic and disillusioned with the result that the union cannot rely upon their support at crucial times.

The precise ways in which different interests may be expressed can vary widely. In some unions, for example, differences of interest may largely reflect geographical location, in which case conventional structures may suffice. In other cases, however, there may be distinctive occupational interests which cut across regions and areas; in such cases unions sometimes create special decision-making structures for these different interests or else ensure that all the interests have some minimal representation upon key committees or councils. At workplace level, the representation of different interests is of equal importance: if they are to be effective, workplace organisations need to ensure that the structure of representative constituencies reflects the different interests which exist and that none of these positions remains vacant.

Not only does organisational structure need to reflect different interests, it is also necessary for those interests to be reconciled in some way if an overall strategy is to be formulated and pursued.

Unless this is done, there is a risk that sectionalism will dominate. This will mean that certain common interests will not be pursued and, at the same time, the various sectional groups will impose costs upon each other as they seek to pursue their own particular interests. Equally, it is important not only for different views to be known at some central, co-ordinating level, but for them to be represented there. Where this is not the case, it is possible to speak of an oligarchical structure. Under such conditions, the reconciliation of interests may be arbitrary and member interests may be subordinated to institutional concerns and the personal interests of the oligarchs which are opposed to members' priorities. In other words, there needs to be some structure at the highest level of the organisation through which representatives of different interests achieve some form of accommodation. In the case of workplace organisations, this may take the form of a representatives' committee. At national level annual conferences or executive councils may play a similar role.

Thirdly, it is argued, a union requires resources not only to permit the expression and reconciliation of interests but also to investigate and understand the second dimension crucial to effective policy formation; the context in which the union operates. The nature of these resources may vary widely between unions. In some cases they may take the form of specialist officers working full-time for the union. In other cases the union may rely more heavily upon lay officials; but even these require resources, if only in the form of time-off, to fulfil their union responsibilities. Moreover, if strategies are to be important and if complex issues are to be

tackled seriously, it is likely that specialist skills and personnel who spend the bulk of their time on such matters will be needed. Hence, an effective workplace organisation may require a hierarchy of representatives and possibly one or two full-time representatives. It may also require specialist advice, an obvious source being the union nationally. In the same way, unions nationally require a structure of full-time officials and specialist staff in a range of areas. (It is possible to extend the list of organisational resources, for example, to include large strike funds).

Where these three elements exist: representation of sectional interests, means by which different interests may be reconciled and organisational resources, then a union may be referred to as being well-developed. The degree of union development, and the way in which it is achieved, are likely to be related to the nature of union membership. For example, a national union with a homogeneous membership in terms of occupation and industry may have fewer problems in reconciling different interests. At the same time it can achieve economies of scale in the use of its resources insofar as it needs to develop expertise only in relation to one industry and occupation. Similarly, it has been argued that an all-encompassing organisation is likely to demonstrate a broader range of interests and, accordingly, it may require greater specialist resources.

There is also an important size effect upon the degree of union development, which can best be demonstrated by considering

workplace union organisation. Where a union has few members it is likely to have only one representative. At first sight problems of co-ordination would therefore appear to be few. However, in such situations members may often act individualistically, the representative may have little time to pursue union matters and he or she may find it difficult, with few resources and little experience, to develop any coherent policy. Discussions of union policy are likely to be informal and *ad hoc*. Union organisation may therefore be extremely fragile. On the other hand, where the membership is larger there are clearly greater pressures for some type of formal organisation. At the same time, the greater workload of the union will mean that these formal structures are used and that representatives build up expertise both individually and collectively (see, for example, Batstone et al 1977). In short, the larger the membership the more developed the union organisation is likely to be.

In this second part of the chapter collective bargaining, union activity and organisation have been considered. It has been argued that union activity is shaped by the nature of its membership and organisational development at workplace level. The importance of the following has been stressed: size and the particular nature of the membership; the existence of representative constituencies which permit the representation and reconciliation centrally of different and conflicting interests; and resources in the form of senior and full-time representatives.

Implications for the Empirical Research

The implicit assumption in the published literature has been that non-manual workers have distinctive attitudes towards trade unionism since they have been traditionally regarded as 'individualistic' and 'anti-union'. In discussing previous research it has been noted that the views expressed by such workers have been varied, depending upon a variety of factors relating to their position at the workplace, type of communities in which they reside, past experiences and so on. The literature abundantly asserts that not only do non-manual members expect workplace unionism to be concerned with employment conditions, as it is for manual workers, but that they are also likely to make demands which imply interests directly counter to those of the shop-floor.

Despite the increasing interest shown in recent years about, on the one hand, the growth and character of non-manual unions and on the other, workplace organisations in manual unions, little attention has been paid to non-manual union local bargaining and organisation. Moreover, most examinations of the relationship between workplace representatives, members and the wider union organisation with the exception of Batstone et al (1977) and Nicholson et al (1981) have been of a static nature. That is, they have noted the present nature of the relationships with little or no reference to the manner in which these relationships developed or are likely to change. Although Batstone and his colleagues dealt with the changing nature of the relationship between particular individual workplace organisations and wider union organisations, both in non-

manual and manual unions, which are clearly important and should be explained, they did not deal with more general changes in relationships between workplace organisations and wider unions as a whole.

For example, the prevailing economic climate is almost bound to bring about change in the relationships between various elements within union organisations. The special interests of non-manual groups will vary according to occupations and situations; whether for instance, they are administrators, clerks and technicians; and whether they are in large bureaucracies and small isolated work groups. It thus seems important to explore the nature of changes and the manner in which particular unions seek to accommodate them.

From this perspective it would be appropriate to examine effects of changes on unions which have formalised central bargaining and those with fragmented decentralised bargaining. Thus in examining the relationship between workplace organisations and wider union organisations it is necessary initially to determine the form of organisational structure existing, the manner it developed, and the role played by workplace representatives and full-time officials.

Goodman and Whittingham noted that various non-manual and manual unions' rules allowed 'a good deal of freedom for workplace organisations from the control of wider union organisations in conducting workplace bargaining' (1969:52). It is necessary to determine therefore the degree to which the actions of workplace organisations reflect this formal division of power and authority.

Research may reveal not only a high degree of freedom from external control of the wider union organisation, but also a high degree of isolation on the part of workplace representatives in their relationships with members and the wider union. On the other hand, workplace organisations to a greater or lesser degree may be dependent upon the wider union in seeking to attain their objectives.

Boraston et al (1975) identified the size and resources of workplace organisations, and the system of collective bargaining and attitudes and structures of management as the main determinants of varying degrees of dependency. Research may reveal the existence of individual cycles of dependency in which the degree of dependency of individual workplace organisations will vary over time in a manner reflecting particular patterns of historical experience. However, one fact, the changing economic climate, is likely to affect the vast majority of workplace organisations to a greater or lesser degree, thus supporting the notion that variations in levels of dependency of workplace organisations are related to fluctuations in the general economic and political climate.

As the discussion in this chapter suggests, the central question is whether non-manual workplace trade unionism is essentially similar to manual workplace unionism (Bain et al 1973:67). Key elements in this respect are: collective bargaining arrangements, employer structures and policies, the market for labour and for the product or service, and the nature of the work process. These factors are

likely to shape not only the general pattern of non-manual union influence but also its approach to new technology.

The significance of new technology

The reasons for relating the question of non-manual trade unions and new technology can be argued from two different starting points: from that of an interest in the impact of technical change and from that of an interest in the nature of work and its effect upon union character. From the first perspective the attraction of considering new technology lies in its being a critical case. There is often a risk that a general picture of the state of workplace trade unionism and industrial relations will be excessively crude and, to that extent, misleading. This is particularly true given problems of developing adequate measures of union strength and influence. Not only are these difficult to assess at the best of times, but in addition a union may maintain a substantial role even where its influence has declined. It is therefore useful, in addition to building up a general picture, to focus upon some specific area or issue and analyse it in somewhat greater depth. There was, unfortunately, no opportunity to achieve this with the 1980 survey, but the case studies enabled a more detailed picture in relation to one issue to be developed.

The case for choosing technical change as a 'test case' can be made on a number of grounds. One attraction is that it is in some senses 'new'; that is, it is an issue where, to some degree, there is much more scope for change than is the case on many other issues.

It is possible, for example, that the pattern of joint regulation will remain fairly stable elsewhere while in new technology areas the employer will be able to impose new terms and conditions. That is, new technology provides a means by which new sets of principles may be introduced into the workplace. Hence, as the field of application of new technology expands, so will the scope of these new patterns. Accordingly, areas where new technology is applied may be more sensitive to the 1980s recession than other areas.

Secondly, it has often been argued that new technology serves as a form of labour control. For Braverman (1974), for example, new technology constituted a further significant step in the degradation of work, while for R. Edwards (1979) new technology permitted not only the more widespread application of technical control over the direction of work but also the evaluation of worker performance through technical means. Through the application of micro-electronics, management are able to remove labour from the production process since its functions are increasingly assumed by the technology; accordingly, the employer has need of fewer workers. In other words, not only is new technology 'new' and hence may highlight changes in industrial relations, but in addition it may constitute an important means by which employers change the pattern of industrial relations.

Considered from the second perspective of an interest in the nature of work and its effect upon union character, the reasons for stressing their importance follows from the significance of the

constraints upon and expectations of non-manual workers. Much of the earlier literature on the subject of new technology adopted a crude form of technological or economic determinism. It was argued, for example, that new technology would increase unemployment and degrade work. It has increasingly been recognised, however, that such approaches commit the same errors as earlier debates on automation, the post-industrial society and the convergence of industrial societies (see Bell 1974). Hence, emphasis has been increasingly placed not only upon the social determinants of the development of new technology, but also upon the importance of social factors in shaping its precise impact when new technology is introduced into any particular situation (Thompson 1983). For example, it follows that in order to understand the impact of new technology upon employment it is necessary to take into account not only the nature of the technology as such, but also the goals, policies and activities of the various groups involved. Hence, with a clearer understanding of these factors, it is possible to comprehend, or even predict, the similarities and differences between non-manual and manual workplace trade unionism.

Given this approach, then clearly the issues which have been discussed above are likely to be of considerable importance in understanding how new technology affects industrial relations and the nature of work. The economic recession and the variations in its impact upon particular employers and unions, are likely to shape the resources which each can bring to bear upon the way in which it affects trade unions and their members. Similarly, it has been argued that the nature of the workgroups covered by the union and

the forms of union organisation are also likely to affect both union power and the sorts of strategies which it pursues. Hence, for example, it would be expected, given any type of membership, that more developed workplace organisations would negotiate more actively and over a wider range of issues concerning new technology than a less developed organisation. Other things being equal, the same would be true of a workplace organisation which was more strongly integrated with the wider union.

3 Factors Affecting Workplace Organisations

The analysis of workplace organisations has as its starting point the core characteristics suggested by previous research; leadership, consciousness, and collective action. Although workers' own initiative and commitment is a necessary condition for the development of their organisations, it is an insufficient condition. The size of the workplace, industry or sector of employment, and technology have been found to produce clear effects upon a great variety of phenomena in industrial relations and organisational behaviour (see, for example, Ingham 1970). So it is quite understandable that their influence upon the development of workplace organisations should be studied. But there are other potential influences, the particularly important ones being the structure of collective bargaining, management structure and strategy, and the role of unions.

Structure of Collective Bargaining

Analyses have been developed which elaborate the structure of collective bargaining (see, for example, Clegg 1976:8-10; 1979:115). The variety within the structure of collective bargaining is identified by the *level* and the *scope* of bargaining. Firstly, the level of bargaining defines the forms of power within the hierarchy of trade unions. The main centre of power is the organisational level which negotiates the agreements and so if the bargaining is at

the enterprise or workplace level, the independence of workplace organisations is reinforced. Secondly, if the scope of bargaining above workplace level is very comprehensive, covering wages, hours, other conditions of work and benefits, and extending to the regulation of the contents of jobs and other aspects within the sphere of managerial prerogatives, it may be expected that the independence of workplace organisations will be lower. Only minor tasks of agreement administration are left to workplace representatives and so the inducements for investing energy in this activity are small.

Thus centralised collective bargaining creates very little independence for workplace organisations. By way of an example, Clegg referred to collective bargaining in Sweden and explained the underdevelopment of workplace level activities thus:

> *What is certain is that the scope and control of industry agreements are far greater in Sweden than is common in the British private sector, leaving relatively little room for plant negotiation; and that for the most part Swedish workplace organisations work within their limits (1976:53).*

The potential merits of Clegg's theory are not, however, restricted to its explanation of the qualities of collective bargaining structures. It is also strengthened by observations of workplace size and different industries; and these can also be seen as potential influences upon workplace organisations.

A number of major studies have found the size of the workplace to be an extremely important influence (see, for example, Boraston et

al 1975; Brown et al 1978; Brown 1981). Boraston et al (1975:169) pointed to the increasing possibilities in larger organisations of accumulating resources for the workplace organisation, acquiring skills and experience in bargaining on different types of topics; and Brown et al (1978:141-42) found a positive relationship between the size of the workplace and the increasing stability of shop steward organisations. The main theoretical conclusion to be drawn from these results is that as the size of the workplace increases there is a cumulative complexity in terms of the number of different types of institutions, procedures, level of internal hierarchy, forms of industrial action and interrelationships with other activities in industrial relations.

The industry or sector of employment is also likely to be a strong influence upon the development of workplace organisations because of wide differences in the traditions of trade unions and the changing strategies of management and government in calculating the economic and political costs of different responses and initiatives (Clegg 1979:9-53; Terry 1982). In the 1980 Workplace Industrial Relations Survey (as will be illustrated in Chapter 5) a clear industry and sector effect could be detected on various aspects of workplace trade unionism.

Management Structures and Strategies

Another factor influencing workplace organisation is management itself. In the foreword to the study by Brown (1973), Bain, Clegg

and Flanders stated that 'the main influence upon the shop steward organisation is the control system operated by management, in its turn largely governed by the characteristics of the product market within which the firm competes'.

Management structures

One way in which management can influence workplace organisations is related to the thesis that 'the structure of collective bargaining is closely associated with the structure of management'. For example, a centralised company agreement requires centralised company personnel policies, and centralised managerial authority in labour matters (Boraston et al 1975:197).

Particular types of issue can be more easily negotiated at one level rather than another. Most obviously, it is extremely difficult to bargain over corporate strategy at shop-floor level. This suggests that more centralised bargaining with an employer facilitates a broader strategy on the part of the union, reduces the tendencies towards sectionalism while, at the same time, the union will be negotiating with those who have a greater influence on management policy.

Union influence may be greater and more general if workplace bargaining takes place within a framework shaped at a high level of bargaining. Thereby, the weaker have some degree of protection and the patterns of bargaining have greater legitimacy in management's

eyes. However, centralised bargaining over work organisation issues cannot deal with the detailed formulation and implementation of agreements in a wide diversity of situations. It is for this reason that on many issues bargaining at a variety of levels, as long as it is co-ordinated in some way, is likely to give unions greater influence.

If such 'multi-level' bargaining is important, then it is also necessary to ask what factors affect the number of levels at which a union negotiates. Generally it is easier for unions to negotiate informally below the formal level of bargaining than it is for them to bargain informally at a higher level. It follows that the more centralised bargaining is, the greater are the opportunities for more than one level of bargaining. Centralised bargaining gives unions two potentially important advantages. Firstly, it provides a greater opportunity to negotiate over a wide range of issues and over matters which might in other situations be seen as within the exclusive remit of management. Secondly, it increases the opportunity for bargaining at a variety of levels.

Hence a growing trend over the last two decades has been the development of workplace organisation even where bargaining is centralised. This has occurred in part because there are limitations on the extent to which detailed negotiations on matters such as workplace organisation can be conducted meaningfully at the centre. Thus local supplementary bargaining has developed and, along with this, a growing sophistication of workplace organisation.

Finally, one other aspect of management is likely to be important: the degree of bureaucracy in the administration of industrial relations. Where systems are highly bureaucratic, there are greater opportunities for union influence. This is so for two reasons: firstly, the very bureaucracy itself can be used as a sanction upon management; secondly, bureaucratic rules are of a more public nature and are meant to be 'rational' both in themselves and in their application. Hence a union is able to negotiate more easily over inconsistencies in the rules themselves or in their application in more bureaucratic situations. This is contrary to a good deal of traditional industrial relations wisdom which has stressed the advantages of informal bargaining for manual shop stewards. Where workplace organisation is extremely strong this may well be true. But most workplace organisations are not, and never have been, extremely strong. Secondly, this conventional view seriously underestimates the advantages which management gains from informality. Thirdly, bureaucratic rules and agreements can be a fertile ground for informal bargaining. Finally, traditional arguments have been based upon 'workerist' and romantic accounts of extreme situations.

The thesis that bargaining and management structures influence workplace organisations can be illustrated by the contrast between the public and private sector. In the public sector, the state as an employer has standardised jobs of different kinds and at different levels in the organisational hierarchy. This forms a basis for centralising collective bargaining in the public sector.

In the private sector, differences can be very significant even within the same industry. This complicates the negotiation of industry-wide agreements and reduces the degree of control. Even within the same enterprise the different profit-centres and plants may have such different work processes, job structures, environmental contexts and pressures from the workers that centralised negotiation at the enterprise level is not preferred by management.

To compare industrial relations structures in the private and public sectors, Thomson (1983) proposed a broad classification showing the differences between the factors affecting decision-making in three sectors: private, public market and public non-market. The focus of his argument was on the different objectives of management (profit, growth in market share, public service), the tendencies to centralisation in the public sector and the way in which lower managerial actions are constrained in these different sectors. This enabled him to argue that a close relationship exists between the economic and administrative contexts of organisations and the type of industrial relations structures and procedures found in those organisations (1983:131-45).

In the private sector, the market operates through consumer demand for products or services, which guides the nature and extent of output, the amount of investment, and in conjunction with cost factors, the price at which the output is sold. Companies are

competitive, although some more so than others, and organisational objectives are geared to profit and growth.

Public market sector organisations have a significant degree of financial independence of central government, operate according to the price mechanism and are expected to achieve economic profit targets. However, the main differences between private and public market sectors may be more practical than theoretical. A National Economic Development Office report (1976) noted that 'a good deal of confusion has arisen from drawing on private sector analogies' and pointed to various features which distinguished nationalised industries from private sector enterprises, including the strategic positions which they occupy in the economy, the political and social pressures to which they are subject and their freedom from the ultimate financial discipline of bankruptcy. Overall, therefore, while there certainly are market constraints upon the nationalised industries, their operation in practice means that they are a long way from the context of the private sector.

In the non-market public sector, the lack of a price mechanism as a means of determining output and raising revenue puts the onus for decision-making into the political sphere, where the relationship between the provision of services and the means of paying for them is remote, denying any direct role for consumer demand in revealing preferences. Certainly, economic theories of democracy such as those of Downs (1957) have been devised to deal with this, but they can only establish broad principles. Likewise economic criteria

such as cost-benefit analysis can be utilised, but only for alternatives within categories, not easily between them. Even the determination of output is difficult in the non-market public sector: either the cost of the inputs must be used, or crude qualitative measures. It follows that the measurement of productivity is often virtually impossible.

It can be argued, then, that different economic contexts of the employing organisations affect management decision-making in the private and public sectors. Major decisions in the private sector are generally taken by boards of directors, but lower-level managers are also expected to contribute with initiatives at their own levels. Some companies are small, measured both by sales turnover and number of workers, which enables lines of communication to be short. In contrast, of course, others are large, complex and bureaucratic in operation. But even here since company markets and production processes are often segmented by specialisation in the goods produced, there is frequently a need to decentralise a good deal of decision-making to the operating units, leaving the head office primarily concerned with co-ordination and capital allocation functions.

Decentralisation can cause weaknesses in industrial relations, where the abstention of boards of directors from policy-making can encourage an expansion of fractional bargaining and the exploitation of managerial and union power at local level by small work groups. Marsh (1971), for instance, found that some two-thirds of multi-

plant companies in engineering had no member of the board responsible for industrial relations and Winkler (1974) argued that even when such directors do exist, they are too remote from the workplace to respond effectively. Even so, although the Donovan Commission's strong recommendations that all boards of directors should develop their own industrial relations policies might not have been achieved to the extent it hoped for, in the private sector it does provide a model of management decision-making which offers to improve efficiency in the longer-term. Moreover, the organisational climate in the private sector is more responsive to managerially induced change, since managers are expected to think in terms of initiatives, risk and potential personal rewards.

In contrast, management decision-making in the public sector involves complex, hierarchic administrative structures, a tendency towards centralised intervention to achieve consistency, uniformity of rules and standards and, in the absence of easily identifiable performance criteria, the need to reconcile political commitments and expectations with professional judgements and operational demands (see Winchester 1983:160-62). This generalisation, of course, obscures variations within the public sector and especially between the market and the non-market sectors.

Technical innovation

Technical innovation will, of course, reflect the broader strategy of employers. Hence the reasons underlying it are likely to vary

widely. As discussed in the previous chapter, in the burgeoning 'labour process' literature the central stimulus to technical change is generally seen to be the desire of the employer to deskill and control the worker (for example, Braverman 1974; R. Edwards 1979). In this way the 'valorisation of capital' (crudely, profits) is achieved. This argument is incomplete. Technical change often leads to increases in worker skill and control, while labour considerations are often not the primary consideration of the employer at all. The state of the product market and the costs of inputs other than labour are important. Technical innovation may, therefore, reflect changes or chances in the product market or in the use of raw materials.

The exact importance of labour considerations in decisions will clearly vary according to the product process, the nature of the labour force and the nature of the employer. It is, however, possible that innovations which have been introduced for product market reasons are seen to have implications for the way in which labour is used. That is, new technology may provide opportunities or create problems in relation to the labour force which might not initially have been foreseen. The scale of the literature advising managers on the implications, particularly in organisational terms, of new technology suggests that this is often the case (for a useful review of this theme see Marstrand 1984).

It has been argued then, that the impact of technology cannot be determined in any *a priori* manner. It has been recognised that

technology plays an important role in at least two respects. Firstly, it is a medium through which priorities and interests are expressed, and it therefore tends to bias action in favour of those interests. Secondly, a change of technology may bias action in ways unforeseen by those who introduced it. It follows that it is necessary to consider not only why employers introduce new technology but also their industrial relations strategy.

The industrial relations strategy of management

Management industrial relations strategy has over the last decade or so begun to be the subject of debate within the labour process literature, industrial relations and organisation theory. Within the labour process literature the emphasis, or so it is claimed, has been on the way in which management's approach towards its labour force is shaped by the overriding priority of the profit motive. Following from debates upon the reform of industrial relations, great emphasis was placed in the industrial relations literature upon the need for both practitioners and academics to integrate the analysis of industrial relations into a wider framework of management structure and strategy. Finally, organisation theory has paid some attention to the broader nature of management strategy, although frequently in prescriptive rather than analytical terms, but has rarely discussed the question of industrial relations.

Both labour process and industrial relations writers have argued that certain characteristics of the labour force and the employer

shape the approach which is adopted towards labour. But there are also important differences between the two approaches. The labour process school has sought to develop fairly simple characterisations of employer strategy. These have rarely been based upon very firm empirical foundations. The labour process writers also assume a convenient correlation between the characteristics of organisations. On the other hand, the industrial relations literature has tended to note particular empirical relationships with little attempt to explain why these should exist in any coherent theoretical manner. In addition, while the labour process tradition has focussed largely upon the work process and paid scant attention to the collective organisation of workers (despite the fact that this is sometimes seen as central to the nature of management strategy), the industrial relations tradition has tended to the opposite extreme.

Two more promising approaches are those of Fox (1974) and of certain industrial relations writers who seek both to have some firmer empirical reference point and at the same time to develop some general theoretical model. Fox sought to differentiate between management strategies in which the existence of any significant conflict of interests between employer and employee is denied and those which accept the reality of such conflicts and the right of workers to pursue their interests.

The second approach focusses upon the reform of industrial relations in Britain over the last two decades. This is seen as a strategy on the part of employers to incorporate and integrate the unions,

thereby winning compliance from the workforce. In this instance it is possible to relate a broad categorisation of management strategy to specific management practices: single employer bargaining, the formalisation of industrial relations procedures, fuller recognition of trade unions and their representatives within the workplace. At the same time, these institutional techniques are seen to facilitate a second strategy: the intensification, or more efficient organisation of work. While this approach is more firmly rooted empirically, it does little to differentiate between employers except in terms of how far they have applied this strategy.

More recently, the question has arisen of how massive unemployment and the changed approach of the state have affected industrial relations. The question arises of how far management has tried to weaken the institutional position and organisation of the unions. Secondly, it has been suggested that the change in the economic environment has shifted the balance of power in industry in such a way that management is able to demand higher levels of effort and reassert its control over the labour force. Thirdly, it has been claimed that employers are making increasing resort to secondary labour; typically involving inferior terms and conditions for the workers concerned. These methods include part-time workers, subcontract labour or contracting work out and the employment of temporary and casual workers. A fourth aspect which is sometimes seen to be relevant is the introduction of techniques aimed at winning the acceptance of management policy by workers. These include direct involvement methods such as briefing groups and

quality circles, and systems of payment which link bonuses, not to individual effort, but to the performance of the establishment or company (Atkinson 1985).

Rather than starting from broad categorisations of management strategy developed from 'grandiose theory', it would seem a more useful approach to study a list of policies and techniques. This is the approach which is adopted in this thesis. In addition, it is then possible to see how far the different industrial relations policies adopted by management affect the role which the union at the workplace is able to play, and how different policies of the workforce and unions have an impact upon the employer.

The Role of Trade Unions

In discussions of the significance of the organisational characteristics of trade unions, issues of power and strategy are closely interrelated. Some writers argue that the nature of trade union unity, the sources of unity, affect the power and strategy of a union, particularly at workplace level (for a critique of this view see Batstone 1984). Unity 'from struggle' is seen as providing 'real' power. On the other hand, if unity means centralisation then an oligarchy may develop which is isolated from the membership. There is a risk, therefore, that the union leadership may develop an excessive sympathy with the interests of the employer, with the result that the union becomes a management force rather than a vehicle for the promotion of member interests.

An alternative approach is to be found in Olson (1963). The argument presented in the previous chapter was that united organisations which cover a large proportion of the workforce will be aware of the costs as well as the gains of their action. If a union represents a small, sectional group it can gain all of the rewards from its action without bearing many of the costs, which will fall upon other groups. Hence, an all-encompassing organisation is likely to bargain over a wider range of issues and achieve more for its members. This may come from co-operating in a realistic manner with the employer. But in other cases such an all-encompassing organisation may adopt an even more conflictual approach than more sectional organisations. Precisely because the union is all-encompassing, any strategy on the part of the employer which endangers it is likely to induce a strong reaction.

The Olson approach, then, suggests that strategy follows from structure. Conversely it can be suggested that structure follows from strategy. For example, if a group of people get together to protect the interests of their profession then they are likely, at least initially, only to recruit professional workers. In the terms used above, they will therefore form a small, sectional organisation. On the other hand, if the aim is to create a class-based organisation, then clearly, if successful, the union will be all-encompassing. However, the extent to which new strategies can be developed, once an organisation is established, is constrained by the structure of the union: its rules and constitution, the sorts of members and leaders it has, and so on. But change is not

impossible, as union mergers, amalgamations and breakaways indicate. Nevertheless, at any one point in time, the sorts of strategies which a union pursues are likely to be significantly affected by its structure, and at the same time, that structure reflects past strategy.

Since a union may have particular characteristics nationally, but a quite different nature at the workplace level, it is especially important to consider the links between the workplace and the wider union. It has to be recognised that union structure and character are not only affected by the extent to which it is sectional or all-encompassing, but also by the precise nature of both the occupations it represents and the employer. In many establishments there is a multiplicity of unions. Unity, therefore, requires co-operation between these different bodies. In addition, the policies which the union pursues are also likely to be affected by its relative importance. The greater the proportion of total membership which a union has, the more it approximates to an all-encompassing organisation. Also, the greater the proportion of a union's membership within a particular place of work, then the closer the links are likely to be between the workplace and the wider union.

There are three different kinds of trade union distinguished here. The first is the union whose members all work for the same employer. Such unions are to be found mainly in the public sector in Britain. The second type of union is one whose membership

comes from one industry. The third is a union whose members come from a range of industries.

The greater the degree of unity the more the union or unions are able to think in strategic terms about employer policy. It would therefore be expected that they would seek, and possibly obtain, a wider range of bargaining. That is, the more integrated union organisation is, the more it assumes the character of an all-encompassing organisation.

However, where the union is of a single-occupational nature, then it is more likely to be able to pursue its own particular interests more effectively. Where there is a high level of multi-union integration there is less scope for sectionalism and it is likely that the union will be involved in a more strategic approach. Similarly, a high level of single-union integration is likely to be found where links with the wider union are strong, while multi-union integration is likely to mean weaker links with the wider union.

Generally speaking, multi-occupational unions are likely to have a greater proportion of the union members in any one workplace. Single-employer and single-industry unions are liable to have a less widely dispersed membership. Hence, single-employer, multi-occupational unions will probably have the closest links between the workplace and the wider union and a high degree of single-union integration. They may, therefore, have lower levels of multi-union integration at the workplace. On the other hand, if they are

dominant at the establishment, they may be able to ensure a high level of multi-union integration, largely on their terms.

At the other extreme is the single-occupation, multi-industry union. Such unions are likely to have a widely dispersed membership and account for a low proportion of the total union membership in the typical establishment. Such a small group may find it tactically advisable to co-operate with other, larger unions at the place of work. While this may involve some moderation of the pursuit of its own particular interests, those interests may be best served through a high level of multi-union integration.

Where the union has a very small membership in absolute terms, it may have only one workplace representative and some degree of co-ordination would not appear to be too difficult. However, in such a situation members may often act individualistically, while it may be difficult for a lone representative to develop any coherent policy. Certainly the larger the membership, the greater the need for some type of formal co-ordination. Similarly, the greater the number of unions the more complex co-ordination problems become. Hence, there is a strong size effect as far as the formal mechanisms of integration are concerned.

In previous chapters the notion of organisational development has been introduced. This concerns the strength and formality of union organisation. In many respects it is similar to ideas of bureaucracy in workplace organisations. An ideal type of a well-

developed union organisation can be drawn up. This would have a sizeable number of representatives whose actions would be co-ordinated through the existence of senior, possibly full-time, representatives and various representatives' committees. Decisions would be taken collectively, rather than sectionally, and the unions would negotiate jointly, achieving a wider range of bargaining and developing a more strategic approach to industrial relations issues. Well-developed unionism, then, is the means by which integration is achieved, particularly in larger establishments.

The Potential Impact of Workplace Organisations

In this chapter, then, the significance of collective bargaining arrangements and the employer for the structure and strategy of the union at the workplace have been outlined. Stress has been placed not only upon the particular characteristics of union members, but also upon the structure of trade union organisation in terms of the range of employers, industries and occupations which it covers. The importance of integration in workplace organisation and its links with the wider union have also been discussed. These factors, it has been suggested, are likely to shape the nature of workplace trade unions.

These main influences, however, reveal clearly one methodological problem in the attempt to develop a framework: the relevant influences have been discussed one after another, pointing out their potential effects. In industrial relations research an explanation

should be based upon an historically-emerging framework of structures and processes in industrial relations; a framework which has stability over a period of time. Previous research into workplace industrial relations has shown that the main impact of workplace organisations is within the context of an employing organisation (Hill 1974:213-35; Batstone et al 1977; Poole 1984). The purpose of the final section in this chapter is to present different aspects of the impact of workplace organisations.

The discussion must be restricted here to one aspect of an institutional theory of an employing organisation, that is, power, which is necessary for understanding the impact of workplace organisations in their relations with the employer. (For attempts to outline a framework for an 'institutional theory of an employing organisation' see Cyert and March 1963; Friedman 1977; R. Edwards 1979). The impact of such organisations is related to issues of control, autonomy and influence in the workplace. As Poole noted, throughout the 1970s, British trade unions had become involved in policy making to an extent previously unknown in peacetime.

> *Such unparalleled involvement was perceived to be readily identifiable at both national and local levels and to be founded upon the twin bases of a steady augmentation of overall membership and penetration of union organization into corners of the occupational structure where, until recently, the very principle of unionism has been abjured.....Transformations in the market situations (such as lower unemployment levels), different patterns of personal involvement in the enterprise, and the questioning of traditional hierachies have all weakened the regulative powers of management (1984:107-108).*

However, management is still in control of the internal resources and processes of an employing organisation (see Friedman 1977:82-

83) and the impact of workplace organisations should be assessed with management assumed to be dominant in the employment relationship.

Limits to management domination

Potentially workers form one type of limit to the domination of management inside the enterprise. One way of referring to this limit has been to analyse it as an uncertainty from the management viewpoint. This uncertainty covers many forms such as voluntary labour turnover, absence from work, late arrivals, go-slows, overtime bans, strikes, withdrawal of co-operation in job tasks, and so on.

The uncertainty is partly due to the internal resistance of workers. For the most part resistance appears in the form of reactions against managerial rules, orders, or plans for change. But it can also include actions and campaigns which are directed towards the future. This may occur in the form of establishment or company level alternative plans formulated by workers concentrating on single issues, reforms, or even presenting comprehensive changes. If such alternative plans are developed in discussions with members of a workplace organisation this may create a commitment amongst the workers to try to get the plans implemented even against the wishes of management. This would bring management into an authority conflict whose nature differs from the one caused by resistance because such alternative plans question the position of management in the enterprise.

The impact of workplace organisations is to a great extent linked with the ability to organise, regulate and control different forms of collective resistance. The leadership of a workplace organisation is in a position to control and regulate important aspects of the uncertainty caused by the workplace. The control of this uncertainty was also mentioned as the underlying rationale of the strong bargaining relationship (Brown 1973). Using this resource leaders can enter into negotiations with management and exchange this resource for new benefits. For example, productivity agreements can at least partly be seen in this way when they have included exchanges of job control for monetary benefits. The interest of management in such exchanges and the credibility of the threat from the workers' side is based upon the experiences of earlier situations. Thus the influential position of leaders is actually based upon past mobilisation of workers. These mobilisations could thus be seen as investments from the viewpoint of individual workers.

Although leadership skills in a workplace organisation can be an important source of impact in workplace industrial relations, this is likely to be so only in the short term. A longer term resource is the commitment of members. When confronted with a conflict of interests with the employer, workers can impose their views only by resorting to collective actions or to the threat of them. Opportunities of drawing on the resources of members are highly dependent upon the way these members value their input to the maintenance of the workplace organisation and specifically to

collective action. There are two different types of options: firstly, that the resources governed by individuals and submitted to the workplace organisation during a phase of collective action are calculated by individuals as sacrifices or costs; secondly, that the process of collective action, like the maintenance of the workplace organisation in general, is considered to be a valued aspect of the workers' working life. Collective resistance as a form of impact of workplace organisation is dependent upon the degree to which the ordinary members of a workplace organisation evaluate their input as cost or as a valuable part of working life.

Strategic options

It is highly unrealistic to assume that the employer does not respond to the extension of the limits imposed upon the domination of management. The question thus becomes; what are the strategic options available for the employer ? Friedman (1977) constructed two types which have become influential in the discussion of strategies for managerial control of the labour process. The first is called the 'strategy of direct control' and the second the 'strategy of responsible autonomy'.

The direct control type of strategy uses coercive threats, close supervision and minimal individual responsibility. Management invests in control systems to secure a unitary decision-making structure and to ensure that its decisions will be implemented.

The responsible autonomy type of strategy is aimed at harnessing 'the adaptability of labour power by giving workers leeway and encouraging them to adapt to changing situations beneficial to the firm' (1977:78). To achieve this, Friedman argued, management strategies include the 'increased use of techniques to co-opt worker organisations'. Responsible autonomy accepts that there are limits to managerial domination and has been developed because managements 'have had to deal.....with *organised* worker resistance' (1977:79). This strategy assumes that the emergence of collective resistance is an irreversible process and that it costs more to get rid of the resistance than to try to accommodate it on a collective basis and make use of the leadership and organisation of workers for managerial ends too.

The strategy of responsible autonomy has been closely linked with the implementation of pluralistic procedural reforms where workers' representatives and their workplace organisations are formally recognised by management (see Batstone 1984:305-306). A restricted autonomy is granted to the workplace organisation by management in the administration of collective bargaining agreements and the labour process. Whilst these features are necessary conditions for the success of the strategy, the studies of Friedman (1977), Burawoy (1979) and R. Edwards (1979) pointed out that the strategy of responsible autonomy is linked with much more basic characteristics of employing organisations; that is, their size, profitability, market position and characteristics of the industry, strategies of recruitment and formation of internal labour markets,

occupation, design of jobs and use of technology, wages policy and fringe benefits.

The first implication which can be drawn from the strategy of responsible autonomy is that there is considerable flexibility in the 'frontier of control' from the managerial viewpoint. This is because of the wide range of alternative means through which management is able to secure consent in the day-to-day operations of the enterprise. The second implication is that procedural reforms in the workplace are inaccurate indicators as such for the impact of workplace organisations without paying attention to the overall pattern of strategic interaction between such organisations and management. For this reason it is impossible to develop a theory of workers' impact which is based only upon institutional and organisational criteria. The latter are unable to retain their accuracy over major tactical periods because of shifts in the balance of power between the parties.

Conclusions

In Chapter 1, the development and maintenance of leadership function, workplace consciousness, and the ability to mobilise workers in a workplace to collective action, were identified as the essential characteristics of workplace organisations. However, these characteristics were only a starting point for the analysis of workplace organisations. Equally important are the other factors which influence their development and maintenance; collective

bargaining structures, management and trade unions. The strength of previous research was identified as its ability to relate workplace industrial relations to the industry and national level industrial relations and identify a variety of influences upon the development of workplace organisations from these contexts. The additions suggested to this approach concerned the way of linking particular features of trade union workplace organisation to a wider structural context; specifically, the nature of management in the employing organisation. Within the employing organisation a workplace organisation can appear as having an impact upon the contents of procedural and substantive characteristics of bargaining.

The differing impact of workplace organisations is dependent upon wider structural relations beyond the immediate context of these organisations. These structural relations include market and interorganisational relations of employers. But the impact of workplace organisations cannot be understood without paying attention to the relationship between the parties. Whilst both the means available to these organisations and the ends considered as important are sensitive to the conditions of a certain situation, study of them should be in historical context and changes identified over a particular given period of time.

The changing focus of the actions of workplace organisations is also an important characteristic and requires equal prominence with the formal, institutional and organisational features. Workplace

organisations are movements where organisational unity and willingness to take action are conditioned by commitments to immediate goals and the general purpose expressed within them. Consequently this framework leads to the conclusion that analysis of workplace organisation must include both the organisational form and the character in terms of goals and behaviour.

Part II Non-Manual Workplace Unionism in the 1980s

4 Research Focus and Methodology

The analysis in Part I of the relationship between the main characteristics of workplace organisations and workplace industrial relations has provided an indication of factors affecting manual organisations in the 1960s and 1970s. This analysis has also considered the opportunities and constraints related to the possible emergence of forms of workplace organisations amongst non-manual workers. This chapter develops a research focus for the study of workplace trade unionism in the non-manual sphere and discusses the methodology adopted for the empirical work. The subsequent chapters in this second part present the findings from the empirical data. Two chapters in Part III then utilise this data to interpret and explain the development and character of workplace trade unionism amongst non-manual workers in the 1980s.

This chapter comprises two sections. The first maps out the broad areas of interest upon which the empirical research focussed, developing a series of classifications which facilitated analysis of workplace organisation amongst non-manual workers. Within this section three main concepts are discussed: the patterns of workplace organisations, the factors influencing these organisations and union character. In the second section of this chapter a detailed outline of the research methodology is presented. This section includes a discussion of the reasons for the choice of methods and the strengths and weaknesses of the approaches adopted.

Focus of the Research

The limited information available on workplace trade unionism amongst non-manual workers dictated the need for research to start from broad areas of interest rather than from tightly drawn hypotheses. It was only when research had progressed and the stock of knowledge available had increased that it became possible to distinguish testable hypotheses of any validity. The broad areas of interest which initially directed research had to be drawn from past empirical work into manual workplace organisation and from inquiries into the growth, character and attitudes of non-manual workers and their unions. Thus research was initially directed towards three areas of study: the origins of workplace organisation, organisational behaviour, and specifically the development of organisations within the non-manual context.

The development of the concept of workplace organisation within non-manual unions provided an opportunity to question further the importance attached to the work situation as the building block of such organisation. Although this study was primarily concerned with union organisations and activities, rather than with occupational groups, the work situation was felt to be significant in its influence upon the character of workplace representation. Occupational groups such as technicians, clerical and administrative workers experience different work environments and these will result in different processes by which workplace representation develops and indicate a clear need to distinguish between them. However,

for certain non-manual workers across a broad range of occupations and industries the work situation does not inevitably lead to the formation of any kind of work group or collective activity. Wide variations in the availability and effectiveness of individual and collective strategies within non-manual groups provided an opportunity to assess the conditions attached to the development of workplace representation.

Consideration of workplace non-manual unionism thus raised a range of particularly interesting questions related to the possibility of an integrated and unified workplace organisation developing. Previous research into manual workplace organisations has tended to focus upon the strong, well established and unified shop steward organisations within private manufacturing plants. Organisation within such plants developed amongst workforces which, although not necessarily homogeneous, were relatively undifferentiated occupationally. Clearly the conditions needed to create a similarly unified non-manual workplace organisation differed considerably from those in a private manufacturing plant. Apart from the fact that attempts have to be made to identify or generate common goals amongst very different occupational groupings of workers, there is little reason to assume that attitudes to union membership will indicate a strong commitment to collectivism. The inevitability or indeed the likelihood of an integrated workplace organisation forming in a non-manual union had to be questioned. What kinds of conditions were needed to create it ? Had the changes in union structure and policy in any way facilitated it ? Had management,

as Terry (1979) suggested for manual workplace organisations, played an important sponsorship role ? Once formed what functions could the organisation perform for such workforces ? Was there a greater likelihood of workplace representation developing in certain establishments rather than others or around particular occupational groups ? Furthermore, would workplace organisation vary in different types of industries and sectors and if so could patterns be distinguished in such variation ?

As for organisational behaviour, the research concentrated primarily upon the role of the workplace representatives. Two interrelated factors, drawn from previous research, structured this analysis. These were the importance of management industrial relations policies in the development of the representatives' role and the influence of a changing scope for bargaining upon that role. The connection between these two factors was that a broadening in the scope for bargaining had prompted management encouragement of shop steward activity. This was a relationship which needed to be explored further in the non-manual sphere. Was representative activity solely dependent upon direct management encouragement ? Were workers and their representatives capable independently of imposing initiatives and a wider bargaining scope upon management ?

In pursuing these questions it became apparent that a series of classifications was needed to help study workplace organisations. The present study developed three distinct classifications to analyse the similarities and differences between organisations.

The first sought to make a broad distinction in the *patterns* of workplace organisation between formal and informal well-developed and less-developed organisations. The second identified a number of factors as having possible *influences* upon these organisations. The third classification developed the concept of union *character*.

Patterns of union organisation

This research, having questioned the central importance of the self-determining work group as a basis for non-manual worker representation, then needed to identify alternative criteria determining such representation. This, however, is no simple task. Workforces which cover a range of occupational groups working in very different conditions are likely to show significant variations in the way they are represented. The nature of the workplaces will vary significantly for different groups of workers. For certain workers the workplace will be an 'establishment', for example, an office. Other workers will not carry out most of their tasks in any given establishment but within particular geographical areas, returning only at intervals to their office. A number of different places of work within which work tasks are carried out or to which workers relate and from which they carry out their tasks, will be referred to here as 'workplaces'.

A broad distinction in the classification of workplace organisation is also made between formal and informal interaction amongst representatives. Formal interaction is defined along the lines

adopted by Brown et al (1978), who stressed the regularity of meetings, the existence of a constitution and minute taking. Informal interaction is simply defined as the converse of formal interaction: no regular meetings; no written constitution; no formal minute taking. Although informal, however, such interaction could be well structured and organised. The research attempts the difficult task of tracing individual, personal contacts between representatives corresponding to the 'network of contact' identified by Batstone et al (1977).

The classification of different patterns of workplace organisations can also be used to distinguish different types of representatives. Some representatives will confine themselves to being spokespersons, merely passing on grievances of members. Others will be more active, shaping strategy and taking more initiative. It is particularly important to examine the extent of representative interaction at the workplace and whether such interaction cuts across specific groups, involving several types of representatives.

Factors influencing union organisation

The ways in which the employing organisations operate can have an influence upon workplace representation. These include the way in which the technology places limits upon the system of work arrangement and hence influences the pattern of behaviour in a workplace. Other factors may be the nature of an employer's pay structure, including the scope of collective agreements in force and

level of decision-making, and employer, union and workgroup attitudes, including the history of labour-management relations in the employing organisation.

The size of the workforce can influence workplace organisations through its effect upon both management and union structure and behaviour. Research into manual trade unionism suggests that in workplaces with more than 500 workers, size seems to be more important than any other factor in influencing the development of workplace organisation (Brown et al 1978). However, the size of a local authority, for example, may have a different effect upon workplace organisation by influencing the practicality of organising over a wide geographical area. Thus, are unified and integrated workplace organisations necessarily more likely to develop in larger than smaller workplaces ? Will the conditions needed to create workplace organisations vary in different sized workplaces ?

The effect of workforce size upon the development and behaviour of workplace organisations has to be considered together with management attitudes. One of the constant themes running through recent research has been the importance of management in the development of workplace organisations. There are three important ways in which management influences workplace organisation. The first of these is management structure and the organisation of work. The second is management attitudes and particularly the encouragement or opposition shown to workplace representation. This includes facilities provided: time-off for representative

activities, provision of equipment, and so on. Opposition is reflected in a simple denial of such facilities. There is also the amount of access granted to senior decision-making levels of management as well as differing attitudes of managers towards the workplace union. Thirdly, there is management's approach to bargaining and consultation: which issues may be bargained over at local level and the effect changes in the scope of local bargaining have upon the development of workplace organisation.

The research also seeks to distinguish more precisely the particular features of trade unions which influence workplace organisation. From the wider union the workplace organisation derives specific services and participation in supportive social networks (Hyman 1975:161). Since any workplace organisation may find itself in a vulnerable situation, there is a strong incentive to maintain good relations with local union officials. Conversely, union officials are dependent upon workplace representatives. The latter are the main channel of information about union policies and decisions for members. At the same time, the outward flow of information depends upon the representatives.

A relationship reflecting varying degrees of interdependence exists between the workplace organisation and the wider union. Firstly, the degree of autonomy of the workplace organisation is likely to reflect the nature of the membership: its self-confidence (resulting from past achievements or defeats), bargaining traditions and the extent to which representatives have won the loyalty of those they

represent. Secondly, the relationship between representatives and full-time officials is affected by the experience and self-assertiveness of each. Senior representatives in large workplaces may effectively be full-time union representatives, perhaps exceeding the local officials in experience and may successfully assert their autonomy in workplace industrial relations. Thirdly, national union rules, policies and content of national agreements, also exert some influence by defining issues appropriate for local negotiation and possibly allowing for local full-time officials to authorise agreements.

Another significant influence upon workplace organisation is branch structure. Previous research findings on manual unions have highlighted the importance of the branch, as opposed to workplace organisation, in the public sector (Fryer et al 1974; Boraston et al 1975; Terry 1983). Branch structure is, of course, related to national union rules and policies and full-time officials. So it is important to distinguish the influence of these two 'external' factors. They may well have an effect not only upon branch structure but also upon the development and maintenance of workplace organisation. Finally, research into multi-unionism has drawn attention to the possibly divisive situation created by workers belonging to one of several unions. In a workplace where two or more unions are actively competing for members and where there is considerable friction between them, the workplace organisation may be fragmented and weak. However, whilst multi-unionism may inhibit the development of workplace organisation

embracing the total workforce it raises the possibility of more sophisticated organisation based upon joint union structures.

Union character

Although writers have mentioned union character in relation to manual unions, it is really only in the analysis of non-manual unionism that this concept has been developed unlike the concepts of patterns and influences. One of the abiding concerns in the study of work over the past two decades has been the growth of the non-manual workforce and its increasing representation within trade unions in the public and private sectors. The reason for this continuing academic interest has been the sheer scale of growth of non-manual employment until, in the 1980s, more than half the British workforce is engaged in non-manual work (Bain 1985). This reflects not only an expanded service sector and larger central and local government administrations, but also the greater number of clerical, administrative, technical and scientific workers required to co-ordinate activities in large-scale manufacturing organisations.

Non-manual workers and their work, together with the character of their representative organisations, have become a focus of interest to those sociologists seeking to illuminate developments in capitalism in general and the class structure in particular. For them the burgeoning of this diverse and often individualist and status-oriented group is the main evidence against the polarisation of the class system into two opposing camps of bourgeoisie and

proletariat. For these sociologists the question of whether the non-manual workforce is essentially attached to, or separated from, traditional working class groups and organisations is central to understanding the nature of social class in advanced capitalist society.

However, the progressive disappearance of traditional skills, the impact of technology on the manual/non-manual distinction suggest a need for a thorough-going assessment of the nature of trade unionism in Britain and the future character of the workforce from which the unions will draw their members. The form and influence of non-manual trade unionism demonstrated in this study is a first step in this direction. Paradoxically, the next appropriate step may be to turn attention away from non-manual groups to re-examine the manual yardstick against which developments in non-manual work and unionism have until now been measured.

Research Methods

The methods adopted during the fieldwork were designed to facilitate the application of the research focus. These methods clearly needed to be able to focus satisfactorily upon the features of workplace organisations and the specific influential variables which had been distinguished with such organisations. The research methods also had to be sensitive to the context of non-manual trade unionism.

The research upon which this thesis is based consisted of five detailed case studies and data from the 1980 Workplace Industrial Relations Survey covering manufacturing and non-manufacturing including the public sector. Since data from this survey were utilised and are the focus of attention in Chapter 5, it is necessary here not only to give some details of the case studies but also of the survey.

The importance of the case studies, as with any such intensive case study research (see Mitchell 1983), lies less in their typicality than in the insights which they provide into processes of change. The approach to the field research was guided by a detailed check list of points derived from previous work on manual union organisation. At the same time the findings from the survey were of considerable help in developing the analysis of the case studies. The survey permitted a broader perspective upon the case studies and, in later analyses, helped to guide the writing up of the findings from those case studies. In short, the combination of the two techniques provided reliable and interesting insights.

A large survey cannot hope to cover matters in anywhere near the degree of detail which a case study can. However, the survey draws attention to themes which might have been less confidently pursued in the analysis if this work had been confined to the five case studies. In other words, the two approaches can be seen as complementary precisely because they have different strengths and weaknesses.

In this section the details of the survey and the way in which it was analysed are briefly outlined and then the main points of the case studies are considered. The survey analysis was carried out throughout the spring of 1983. The case studies were undertaken between March 1982 and October 1985.

The hypothesis to test in the survey was whether, as in the manual sphere, the nature of workplace representatives' organisations and the frequency of their various meetings were strongly affected by workforce size, bargaining structures and the wider union. However, the survey demonstrated the limits of the survey method as a means to understand the character of trade unions. The survey revealed a great deal about the organisational form of workplace trade unionism but little about its impact. Thus, although the case study work benefitted from earlier studies into manual workplace industrial relations and the 1980 survey, this provided no more than a guide to the investigation because of the different circumstances from one case to the next. But in the light of the key themes outlined earlier in this chapter, the case study research set out to test the additional hypothesis that strategic groups are important in employing organisations and that the influence of such groups is affected by management and technical change.

The survey

Large-scale surveys have become a major research resource in industrial relations. In the past they were mainly used to produce

descriptive statistics or to examine simple relationships between pairs of variables. One of the major methodological innovations of this research is a more sophisticated use of the data from the survey.

The Workplace Industrial Relations Survey covered public services, private services, and nationalized industries as well as the private manufacturing sector. Interviews were carried out with both managers and worker representatives in over 2,000 establishments throughout the summer of 1980. A factual account of the results of this survey was provided in a report by Daniel and Millward (1983). However, the design of the survey enabled a more detailed analysis of the data than was given in that report, in this case for non-manual workers.

In establishments with recognised trade unions for non-manual workers the senior lay representative of the largest negotiating group was sought for interview. In the event there were just over 1,000 such establishments at which interviews were completed. The researcher was able to undertake a detailed analysis of the non-manual union aspects of the survey. The availability of the data tapes on Warwick University's computer made it possible to carry out specifically tailored analyses for this particular purpose.

The aim of using this survey was both to extend the coverage of the research and to test the central hypothesis which had developed during the course of the examination of manual workplace trade

unions and which informed the initial approach to the case studies. In particular, the concern was to extend the range of unions, industries and sectors beyond those covered by the case studies.

Three principle testing techniques were used in the analysis of data. When the variable was simply a category (known as a nominal-level variable), Chi-square tests were used. When it was an actual number (or interval-level variable), analysis of variance was used. Discriminant analysis was used when the object was to explain a nominal-level variable with reference to interval-level variables.

To carry out a Chi-square test the two nominal-level variables whose relationship is in question are cross-tabulated. The test then compares the incidence of data in the table with the incidence that would maintain if there were no relationship between them. It provides a measure of the confidence with which one can reject the conclusion that there is no relationship between the variables.

Analysis of variance provides a means of judging whether an interval-level variable varies significantly across categories of another variable, such as industrial groupings. Or it may provide a means to assess the relative extent to which it varies across two other variables and thus to assess their relative contribution to the explanation of its variation.

Discriminant analysis is used here to distinguish between two groups of a nominal-level variable using a set of observed interval-level characteristics. The objective is to form a linear combination of the discriminating variables in such a fashion that the two groups are as distinct as possible. Variables are entered one at a time; the one that is best at discriminating is used first and the programme stops when the addition of further variables would not help. This provides an indication of which variables are useful for classification and which are not. These techniques are described in greater detail in Nie et al (1975). David Deaton, research fellow at the Industrial Relations Research Unit, University of Warwick, gave specific advice and aid on the technical aspects of the survey analysis.

Drawing on the data from this large survey, it has been possible to construct for the first time a statistical picture of both the pattern of non-manual workplace organisations and also of the factors which are associated with their activities. In analysing the results the findings are compared with previous research into manual stewards and their organisations. In particular, how well-developed or under-developed non-manual organisations are in the workplace, how much collective bargaining takes place at that level, the degree of union activity, and use of sanctions.

Thus, the survey offered an important base for specifically examining developments in non-manual workplace organisations. But as with other attempts to compare organisational characteristics the

statistical analyses place undue emphasis upon the formal aspects of organisation. The resulting map of the patterns of representatives' organisations reveals little about the processes at work except insofar as they can be deduced from associations between variables. Nevertheless, the size and variety of the sample have permitted an examination of common relationships between different characteristics of workplace organisations which can be used with considerable confidence. In subsequent chapters the case study material permits a more in-depth analysis of the significance of these findings. The detailed analysis of the survey has not only been informed by earlier ideas, but it has also been of considerable help in developing the analysis of the case studies. In other words, the combination of both survey and case studies provides reliable and interesting insights.

The case studies

The selection of industries was due to the concern to examine non-manual workplace trade unionism with a satisfactory mix of occupational and organisational characteristics. It was decided to focus particularly upon clerical, administrative and technical staff groups, rather than groups at managerial and related levels which are proportionately less significant in the body of non-manual unionism.

A review of trade unions indicated that the following would be the most fruitful:

Expansion of non-manual membership was particularly marked in ACTSS, the fastest growing section of the TGWU. Yet interestingly this section had administrative, clerical, technical and supervisory membership in a declining employment situation in industries such as food, drink, tobacco and textiles. Within the TGWU, it was also in this fastest growing section that lay representatives were afforded more participation than any other trade group (Undy et al 1981:143-46).

APEX sought to represent all non-manual workers from office juniors to senior managers and catered for computer, supervisory and managerial staff as well as clerical workers. As with ACTSS, the majority of the membership of APEX was located in private manufacturing industries.

ASTMS claimed to be the largest and fastest-growing union of salaried staff in Europe (Jenkins and Sherman 1979). With approximately half a million members it ranked as the second largest non-manual union in Britain and the sixth largest union within the TUC. ASTMS organised across many sectors, in particular among scientific, technical and managerial workers in industry, commerce, education and health.

NALGO ranked as the largest non-manual union in Britain and was the fourth largest in the TUC. NALGO membership covered a wide range of occupations: lawyers, accountants, engineers,

architects, planners, social workers, librarians, technicians, computer staff, administrators and clerks. The bulk of NALGO membership was located in local government; over sixty per cent of the total.

At the beginning of this study the POEU was the second largest Post Office union and organised on the expanding telecommunications side all technical grades below supervisory level. The POEU has traditionally been considered a public sector craft union (for example, see Undy et al 1981:27). However, technological developments have changed the nature of telecommunications employment. Occupations were grouped into two main categories, external and internal, with the majority of POEU members employed within internal occupations. The major consequence of an overall programme of modernisation since the mid-1970s has resulted in electro-mechanical telephone exchanges being replaced by an electronic system. Compared with the older electro-mechanical system, the technicians' skills required involved much less manual dexterity but much greater system knowledge and mental diagnostic ability. Thus, in this case, technical change had blurred the traditional division between craft and non-manual unionism.

At the time of the research TASS was the non-manual section of the AUEW covering a wide range of occupations, considerably broader than its original base of drawing office staff. As a

consequence of its growing spread of membership into developing technology in engineering it also included secretaries, clerks, finance and production control staff, systems analysts, engineers, supervisors, managers, testers and inspectors. In 1980 TASS claimed to be the largest non-manual union in engineering (TASS 1980).

The first point to be made is that the focus was to be upon unions at a specific level, the workplace, and not upon unions as 'wholes' (for example, as in Undy et al 1981). The approach adopted in this study sought to identify and explain the development and character of non-manual workplace unionism in a context of rapid change. The intention was to explore the effects of major changes taking place in the workplace in the 1980s as many employing organisations shed labour and reorganised production in an attempt to remain competitive, and in particular, to examine the circumstances and behaviour of individuals and groups in a number of establishments which were experiencing declining workforce size and product demand. Thus the aim was to examine the changes taking place at local level in terms of the broader contexts of labour and product markets, work organisation and management industrial relations strategy. In selecting the sample of case studies, therefore, the aim was to include a range of features.

Firstly, the work on collective bargaining set out to be distinctive in two respects. The first was to obtain data from individual establishments and then to augment this documentary material with

interviews with managers and trade unionists and observation techniques as a means of obtaining deeper insights into collective bargaining. Both these methodological features were considered to be crucial in developing a line of analysis. This framework recognises the importance of the specific economic and technological conditions under which labour input is converted to output. It emphasises the role of managerial objectives in relation to generating and sustaining productivity and retention of labour. The influence of labour markets and the product or service market can then be placed within this overall perspective.

In each case study data were to be collected for several grades of workers in a range of bargaining units. It was anticipated that the enterprises would have different approaches to questions such as how far to exploit, or to insulate themselves from, the local labour markets of their establishments; how to ensure managerial compliance; whether to use performance-related bonuses; how far to tie payment to the achievement of job flexibility and so on.

Recent 'radical' writings, as discussed above, have focussed upon management but have tended to see it as all-powerful and have taken insufficient account of the constraints upon management which come from the workforce and the competitive environment. Each case study was to explore the nature of management and the bases of co-operation as well as conflict. They were to bridge the contending approaches with an analysis of the interaction between managerial strategies and worker responses.

Thus the second main feature determining the choice of case studies was management. The empirical work was not to be directly concerned with management itself, but it was seen as central to an understanding of the object of study. This research was exploring the character of unionism partly in terms of the methods that managements use to control and motivate their workforces. Management was a necessary theme for the studies but perhaps most important was the extent to which collective bargaining and management had overlapping common theoretical concerns. The case studies were concerned with the question of where market explanations had to give way to explanations in terms of social process and *vice versa*. They were also seeking to understand the 'open' nature of the employment contract, whereby once labour has been hired it has to be motivated to produce. Consequently they were concerned with patterns of control and compliance, and with the sources of productivity change.

Quite apart from their economic significance, the intense political debate surrounding the role of nationalised industries makes them important subjects of research attention. Public ownership creates problems for the management of industrial relations that are not to be found in the private sector. The research into telecommunications, for example, was expected to cast light upon these. It enabled an examination of whether managerial strategy had been moulded by the particular political context of nationalised industries, with an uneasy ambivalence between the provision of a public service and the attainment of commercial objectives. This

study was expected to sharpen the understanding of the implications of public ownership for industrial relations at a time when economic pressures were undermining the traditional bases of workforce consent without providing suitable alternatives.

It is also clear that industrial reorganisation is a highly differentiated process. Productivity change is associated not only with the introduction of new techniques of production but also with changes in work organisation. Substantial productivity increases can often be secured by the introduction of small work aids, the increasing fragmentation of tasks and, perhaps most importantly, the more efficient use of labour. But the employer's ability to achieve these improvements is far from automatic; because production is a social as well as a technical process employers have to devise ways of harnessing workers' creative capacities. They have to create the conditions in which workers consent to work 'hard'. Thus the research had as its third distinguishing feature an awareness of the often crucial role of industrial relations in shaping the choice of technique, and hence the demand for different types of labour, as well as influencing productivity outcomes with given technical choices.

While a number of writers have pointed out that different production technologies influence the dispersion of workers and the possibility of contact between them even within the confines of a factory, they have concentrated mainly upon work group formation and activity (Sayles 1959; Hill 1974). Despite the observation that differences

in the structure of manual shop steward organisations are very limited within the private manufacturing sector once workforce size has been taken into account, it remained important to consider how the dynamics of workplace organisation might vary with different industries and sectors. There was, in short, a clear need for research which focussed upon how the structure of the workforce and the nature of the work process affected workplace trade unionism.

A number of sources were used to determine the choice of case studies. These included discussing the suitability of particular research sites with union officials and management, and reading various journals and magazines. Six employing organisations and unions were approached. In one case there was a straight refusal and so this contact was not pursued. The employers and unions were approached directly by letter, explaining the purposes of the research and seeking their co-operation. In all cases prior discussions were held with union officials or representatives concerning the research. The co-operation of management was vital in permitting access to the site, in providing documentary sources, allowing interviews and thus helping to build up a picture of management strategy.

The first case study focussed upon an internal POEU branch covering telecommunications technicians working within one of three telephone exchanges over the period from early 1982 to 1984. There were about 850 members which represented almost 100 per cent union membership. The branch was very self-contained because of its

technical nature and location. Pay bargaining was highly centralised and the structure of the union within the employing organisation reflected this fact, although there was also a network of local representatives who negotiated with local management on a wide range of conditions of employment.

The second case study concerned the administrative, clerical and technical workers represented by APEX in the parts and accessories division of a major car manufacturing company over the same period as the telecommunications study. The company had a staff of some 3,000 workers on the site in 1981. By the following year the workforce had declined by a third to 2,000. In 1982, the plant had approximately 1,200 non-manual workers and 800 manual workers. Under agreement all non-manual workers in the company wishing to be represented by a union had to belong to APEX, which by the beginning of 1982 had just over 1,000 members on the main site. Annual negotiations over pay and related matters took place mainly at company level through a joint negotiating committee, but in addition there was a good deal of variation and interpretation of policy both at establishment and department levels.

The third case study investigated a local authority which came into being in 1974 as part of the reorganisation of the local government system in England and Wales. The period covered by the study was from mid-1982 to late 1984. NALGO branch membership was just under 2,500 with about 4,000 eligible for membership. The branch had faced traditional difficulties associated with recruitment; a

scattered workforce. Although annual negotiations over pay occurred at national level, local union organisation was well-developed.

The fourth case study focussed between 1983 and 1985 upon a subsidiary company's largest blanket plant whose parent company was a large concern with interests in a number of sectors outside textiles. There were two recognised unions on the site which between them covered all workers up to and including supervisors. The supervisors and clerical workers were organised into ACTSS, the non-manual section of the TGWU, to which the manual workers belonged. Both unions were based on the site only: the former had seventy-eight members, about eighty per cent of its potential union membership, and the latter had about 450 members, 100 per cent of its potential. Negotiations were either held between the company's personnel department and the joint trade union bodies or within a framework drawn up by personnel and unions.

The fifth case study concerned a metals technology centre which provided research and development facilities. The company was small, employing just over 150 staff on a single site. The union organisation within the company formed a separate group within a branch of ASTMS. Over the period of the study, from 1983 to 1985, about ninety-five clerical, administrative and technical workers were union members. The group officers played a central role in all union matters within the company, where bargaining over pay and related matters was largely confined to company level.

In all the case studies a variety of techniques was employed: interviews with union officials, representatives and managers; observation of union and work situations; and the analysis of a wide range of union and management documents. Approximately three months were devoted to the first stage of research in each of the case studies. During these three months of intensive research an attempt was made to become as fully aware as possible of the operation of the workplace organisation within the companies and the industrial relations processes as they affected non-manual workers. Contacts were not, however, terminated at the end of this period. Return visits were made two years after the detailed research had been completed in order to assess changes in the character of workplace organisation. About one month was spent on these return visits in each case study.

Given this study's focus of interest, the bulk of the interviews were conducted with branch officials and workplace representatives. In the five case studies a total of eighty-two branch officials and representatives were interviewed in depth. Particular care was taken in sampling to account for occupational variations. To gain an overall picture of workplace organisations branch officials or their equivalents were initially interviewed. The questions covered specific information relating to the nature of union organisation: in particular, the range of the union's membership, the links between the workplace and the wider union and the workplace organisation's relations with management. Subsequent interviews with workplace representatives consisted of 'open-ended' questions guided by a

detailed list of points about work situations and union activities. Familiarity with some of the branch officials and representatives involved meant that eventually conversations came to replace formal 'interviews'.

The influential variables distinguished in the previous section also required interviews with full-time union officials and members of management. Five full-time union officials with responsibilities for members within the case studies were interviewed. The aim of these structured interviews was to collect data concerning these officials' jobs. Their broad responsibilities, the nature of their jobs, their relationships with branch officials, representatives and managers were discussed.

In setting up the research a number of managers had been contacted and some interviewing undertaken. Initial interviews with senior managers were used to gain a knowledge of the company's background: size, labour and product or service markets, management structure and so on. In addition, managers with 'labour' responsibilities were interviewed. These interviews covered managers' tasks, discretion, their attitudes and behaviour concerning industrial relations, union representatives and full-time officials, and particular issues in which they had been involved. In this way the important events within companies came to light and could be followed up in detail with the various interested parties. At the end of the research, when the fieldwork was complete, seventeen managers had been interviewed.

To understand the manner in which the workplace organisations operated and the roles played by individuals, observation of union, representative and joint union-management meetings was essential. Approximately seventy formal and informal meetings were attended during the research. Branch meetings and branch committee meetings of unions, representative meetings, regular and *ad hoc* joint union-management meetings were all attended. These regular attendances were followed up with revisits. Thus, events and issues were covered over a period of time rather than presented as 'snapshots' of the organisation. Although observing relevant joint union-management meetings was allowed, meetings between managers was not. However, occasionally informal 'meetings' developed in the researcher's presence, especially between lower level managers, and these, more than formal interviews and meetings, clarified the various interests and power positions of different groups of managers. But it was not possible to observe the same in the higher levels of management, where interviews had to suffice. In general, however, access was excellent.

In an attempt to enrich the data gained from interviews and observations of meetings, minutes of the various types of meetings were also analysed. There were problems of accuracy in such documented information. The detail presented within the minutes varied considerably. Some provided the names and status of those contributing to discussions while others were very vague. This produced an unevenness in the quality of some information, thereby inhibiting certain comparisons which might otherwise have been

made. However, full sets of particular minutes and other union documents dating back to the early 1970s were obtained and these provided invaluable insights into processes taking place and the historical development of workplace organisations.

The findings presented in this thesis are, therefore, based upon a considerable amount of empirical data. To seek an understanding of the patterns, influences and character of non-manual workplace trade unionism a variety of techniques has been employed, using information from a large survey and five detailed case studies. For these reasons the analysis is able to provide a new perspective upon workplace organisation in non-manual trade unions.

5 Workplace Organisation and its Context: The Survey

By utilising data from the 1980 Workplace Industrial Relations Survey this chapter examines the pattern of non-manual representatives' organisations in relation to what previous research has found to be the strongest influences in manual unions. Firstly, the size of the workplace. Can the development, or lack, of representatives' organisations be accounted for by establishment size ? It then reports on associations between collective bargaining levels and these organisations, analysing the level at which bargaining takes place and the range of issues. Next, the detailed pattern of organisation at the workplace is extended into the context of the wider union, outlining the relationship between these organisations, the branch and full-time officials. Finally, collective conflict is assessed, the types of industrial action used, numbers of different incidents, main reasons for the disputes and the duration of action.

Because it was found that establishment size was a dominant influence upon the results it was necessary to allow for this when testing for associations between the other variables, normally by breaking the sample into two or more size bands and seeing whether the relationship still held within each. This form of analysis provides an effective means of identifying the main influences upon the distribution of a particular factor and presenting results in a way that is readily understandable.

It is important to be aware in this chapter that the data refer to the unions to which representatives belonged. Representatives were not selected to provide information on a statistically representative sample of trade unions. It is clear that the larger unions were over-represented in the sample since representatives were the senior lay representatives of the largest and second largest bargaining units at sampled establishments.

The details of the distribution of the sample by union are given in Table 1. Almost twenty per cent of the representatives interviewed were in NALGO and fifteen per cent in ASTMS. Members of APEX, ACTSS and TASS between them accounted for a further fifteen per cent of the sample. These five were the unions most frequently mentioned.

TABLE 1: DISTRIBUTION OF TRADE UNIONS

Number of representatives interviewed and their unions			
10-19	20-49	50-99	100+
APWA‡	NUT	APEX	NALGO
EMA	CPSA	ACTSS	ASTMS
	CQHSE	TASS	
	USDAW		
	IPCS		
	TSSA		
	RCN‡		
	NATSA		

‡ Non-TUC affiliated.

The Influence of Workforce Size

The degree of organisation

In line with previous research on manual unions (Brown et al 1978 and 1981), analysis of the 1980 survey data on non-manual unions showed that the degree of organisation increased with the size of the workforce. It was associated with the existence of senior and full-time representatives, joint representatives' meetings, the use of election procedures and the continuity of representatives.

Questions were asked about the numbers of acknowledged senior and full-time representatives, and the variety of settings in which representatives of any type may meet each other. Firstly, respondents were asked if any of the representatives at their establishment were 'acknowledged by management as senior representatives'. Next they were asked whether 'any of these senior representatives worked all or nearly all of their working time on union matters'. Respondents were then asked a range of questions about the occurrence of different types of meetings of representatives, distinguishing between committees and less formalised meetings.

The replies have been classified by workforce size in Table 2. The likelihood of the features identified as characterising a well-developed representative organisation being present increased strongly with workforce size. This was true of the existence of acknowledged senior and full-time union representatives at the

establishment. Over half the establishments, for instance, had senior representatives with the probability of having one increasing with the size of workforce. This figure is similar to the 1978 survey data on manufacturing non-manual workers which showed that sixty-one per cent of establishments had a senior shop steward (Brown 1981:62). When considering the incidence of senior representatives separately for establishments with fewer than and more than 500 workers, the distributions varied from fifty-eight per cent in the larger establishments (1,000 plus) to ten per cent in the smallest (25-49). This is consistent with the findings of both Brown et al (1978) and Brown (1981) that the existence of the senior representative is strongly associated with workforce size.

TABLE 2: REPRESENTATIVE ORGANISATION BY WORKFORCE SIZE

(Expressed as a percentage of those establishments where a representative is present):

Indicators of representative organisation	Number of full-time non-manual employees					
	25-49	50-99	100-199	200-499	500-999	1000+
Acknowledged senior representative	10	18	23	38	49	58
Full-time representative present	-	-	-	1	2	14
Regular joint representative committee meetings	-	2	4	6	11	24
Regular joint representative meetings	-	1	1	2	8	9
Regular single union representative meetings	4	9	14	24	40	53
Combine meetings (single employer)	4	8	11	20	18	28
Combine meetings (multi-employer)	-	1	3	4	7	9

Full-time representatives were also found more frequently where there were larger workforces as had already been demonstrated for manual groups (Brown 1981). Nevertheless, only one in thirty (3.3

per cent) of establishments had representatives who spent 'all or nearly all of their working time on union matters'. Even among the largest workforces, with more than 1,000 non-manual workers, only fourteen per cent had full-time representatives. This indicates no significant change since 1978 when in two per cent of establishments with non-manual stewards at least one steward was full-time and full-time non-manual stewards were almost exclusively found in establishments with large workforces (Brown 1981:63 and 65).

Further questions sought information on the occurrence and regularity of representatives' committees and meetings. In establishments where workers were represented by two or more unions, respondents were asked if there was a committee that included representatives from their own union and the other unions present. Such multi-union establishments had twenty-seven per cent of respondents reporting the existence of a joint representatives' committee.

Table 2 shows that representatives were twice as likely to have such a committee in establishments which employed over 500 workers. Where these joint representatives' committees existed, respondents were also asked how frequently their committees met. Regular committee meetings (at least every three months) were also more common in larger workforces. Size was also apparently important for the formality of these committees. The existence of written constitutions, standing orders and a minute book were all associated with size.

Joint meetings of representatives from two or more unions in the same establishment are not always as formalised as the existence of a committee implies. Consequently a further set of questions about joint representatives' meetings, irrespective of the existence of a committee, were analysed. The proportion of relevant establishments having representatives' meetings was twenty-four per cent compared with twenty-seven per cent which had a committee. Although these joint representatives' meetings were slightly less frequently reported than those of the committees they were also more likely to occur more frequently in larger establishments.

In establishments where non-manual workers were represented by only one union, respondents were asked if there were meetings of representatives apart from branch meetings. Over one in four respondents reported such meetings. In larger workforces, which generally had more representatives, meetings were more often reported than in smaller workforces. The frequency of meetings other than branch meetings was also associated with size. That is, typically these meetings tended to take place at least every three months in larger workforces.

In workplaces that are part of multi-establishment organisations representatives from one establishment may meet with those from other establishments of the same employer to discuss common issues: apart from meetings organised by their union branch. Representatives may meet sufficiently regularly and formally to consitute a 'committee'. Such 'combine committees' have received attention in manufacturing generally and in the engineering industry

in particular, but have had little study in the service sectors and nationalised industries and non-manual representatives have received even less focus (Clegg 1979).

The questions in the survey used to investigate the extent to which multi-establishment meetings of representatives occur have been used in other surveys and are generally interpreted as a means of identifying combine committees. While Brown noted that 'combine committees [is] a grand name for what is often a very informal and *'ad hoc'* occurrence' (1981:68), this interpretation can also be queried on the grounds that responses might equally well relate to 'official' multi-establishment meetings organised by union officials or even management (see Batstone 1984:104-105). Thus although these multi-establishment representative meetings are referred to here as 'combine meetings', responses to the survey may have referred to a variety of different types of multi-establishment meetings.

Meetings of representatives from the various establishments within the parent organisation occurred in two-thirds of the establishments in the survey and both the existence and frequency of these meetings were more often reported in larger establishments. Other questions asked how long they had been taking place, the reasons for starting them and about management's support for them. About one-third of respondents reported that the 'combine' meetings attended by representatives of their establishment had been occurring for over ten years. The typical figure (median) was eight years. Just over half of respondents reported that the main

reason for starting these meetings was to 'exchange ideas and information' with representatives from other establishments. Finally, respondents were asked whether there had been any difficulties in organising combine meetings and whether or not they had received assistance in attending them from management. A similar proportion, about one in ten, reported difficulties and receiving financial support. There was no association with size in response to these questions about the lifetime of these meetings, reasons for starting them and management help towards them. That is, there were no obvious patterns of variation in these responses in relation to the size of the establishment.

The final type of representatives' meeting that was asked about in the survey was a meeting involving representatives from several different employing organisations. Meetings of this kind were less common than single employer 'combine' meetings and were reported by just under one in four respondents. Generally, they existed and met more frequently in larger establishments, as with single employer combines. However, there was a slightly stronger association between the frequency of multi-employer combine meetings and establishment size, compared with single employer combines, although as Table 2 suggested the relatively small numbers involved here implies this difference should be viewed with caution.

Compared with single employer ones, multi-employer combine meetings were of more recent establishment, but again the predominant reason given for starting the meetings was the exchange of ideas and information between representatives in different establishments.

Support from management in the form of travel, accommodation and administrative assistance was uncommon, being reported in approximately one case in twelve. This result suggests that they were more often independent of management. Once again, however, these final three characteristics showed a weak association with establishment size.

Summary

In many ways the overall picture of a 'well-developed representatives' organisation' was similar to that described for the six manual unions it covered by the workplace industrial relations survey undertaken for Donovan, and later described by Brown et al (1978) for the GMWU and Brown (1981) in manufacturing. The data from the 1980 survey were, however, much more extensive in terms of the unions and industries and sectors covered.

The 1966 workplace survey found that twenty-two per cent of their steward informants described themselves as senior stewards or convenors and fifty-five per cent of plants with stewards had senior stewards (Government Social Survey 1968:16,77). In 1978 the IRRU survey of manufacturing establishments employing fifty or more workers found that seventy-four per cent of those with stewards had recognised senior stewards (this was fifty-five per cent of all plants). The 1980 survey of all industries found that seventy per cent of establishments with manual stewards had senior stewards or convenors (thirty-one per cent of establishments); and although they were less common among non-manual workers (fifty-four per cent

of establishments where a representative was present) this difference was not particularly dramatic.

Turning to the question of how common these full-time stewards and representatives were, Clegg et al (1961) in the late 1950s found that six per cent of their sample of stewards said that they spent more than an average of thirty working hours a week on union business and four per cent were virtually full-time. The 1966 workplace survey found that one per cent of the stewards interviewed claimed to be full-time and that such full-timers existed in four per cent of establishments where unions were recognised (Government Social Survey 1968:16,75). In 1978 the IRRU survey found that manual full-timers existed in twelve per cent of manufacturing establishments where there were stewards (Brown 1981:63). On the basis of these figures, Clegg (1979:52) suggested that over the decade up to 1978 the number of full-time stewards may have increased five-fold. However, despite this considerable increase in numbers, only a minority of establishments in 1980 had full-time stewards: only three per cent of establishments had manual full-timers and less than seven per cent of those with stewards. Thus, although full-timers were rare in non-manual representative organisations (just over three per cent of establishments where a representative was present), manual stewards who spent all or nearly all of their time on union activities were also to be found in only a small minority of establishments. In other words, this aspect of representative hierarchy is the exception rather than the rule in both manual and non-manual workplace unionism.

The third feature of a well-developed representative organisation is the existence of committees and occurrence of meetings. The 1966 workplace survey found that almost two-thirds of stewards claimed that meetings of stewards were held: fifty-five per cent said meetings of stewards from their own unions were held in the place of work and forty-seven per cent that stewards from different unions held joint meetings (Government Social Survey 1968:22). Unfortunately, the published report gives no exact figures about the regularity of these meetings. The IRRU survey found that in 1978 regular meetings of manual stewards were held in thirty-seven per cent of manufacturing establishments (and thirty per cent in the case of non-manuals) where stewards existed (Brown 1981:64).

In 1980 there were joint manual stewards' meetings in thirty-eight per cent of all establishments with stewards, and single-union steward meetings in a third. The proportions for non-manual representatives were twenty-seven per cent and twenty-six per cent respectively. Less than forty per cent of these joint shop steward bodies met at least every three months in the case of manual stewards; just over forty per cent of joint non-manual bodies met this frequently.

The data from the various surveys are not, of course, strictly comparable. But the overall picture appears to be as follows: in line with previous research into manual unions, analysis of the 1980 survey data on non-manual unions showed that some degree of hierarchy existed and a significant minority of workplace representatives' organisations held regular meetings. Furthermore,

this degree of organisation increased with the size of the workforce. This was true of the existence of acknowledged senior and full-time union representatives at the establishment. Again, joint representatives' committees and other less formal meetings of representatives, which can be treated as a rough measure of the degree of organisation, were more common where there were larger workforces. Although few of those involved probably applied the term 'combine' to themselves the incidence of combine meetings was relatively high.

As in the case of other aspects of formal workplace organisation, the exact significance of regular representative meetings is open to question. It may indicate that they constitute a means for senior representatives to ensure the compliance of other representatives. But it is equally plausible to suggest that such meetings may provide an opportunity for 'rank-and-file' representatives to impose checks upon senior representatives. Conversely, the absence of representative meetings suggests a likely increase in representative autonomy. Yet, in such situations representatives may become heavily dependent upon the support of senior representatives (see Batstone 1984 Chapter 5).

The key question, of course, is, does this formalisation mean that representatives become insulated from their members, so that they act as a control over rather than control for those they formally represent ? (See, for example, Cliff 1970:205). Unfortunately, in the 1980 survey there are no data on which to assess this issue. However, the available data from the case studies show little

evidence to support the view that formal workplace organisation will lead to representatives becoming more distanced from their members or assuming greater influence over them.

Election procedures

It was noted in studies of manual stewards that an organisation with little continuity of membership will find it difficult to form bargaining relationships and to protect agreements (Brown 1973, Batstone et al 1977 and Brown et al 1978). Worker representatives in the 1980 survey were asked questions about how and with what frequency they and other representatives were appointed at their particular place of work. The replies, whilst indicating that representative continuity and the use of election procedures were associated with establishment size, showed there was greater variation here than the results from the survey by Brown et al of manual stewards. The replies from the current survey cannot be treated as strictly representative of all unions because respondents were normally members of the largest union in multi-union negotiating groups. However, the largest negotiating groups consisted of a single trade union in most cases (almost eighty per cent), so that the effects of ignoring minority unions upon the overall picture are likely to be small.

The questions sought to distinguish between the methods of appointment of senior representatives and non-senior representatives. However, in many cases the distinction did not hold since there was only a single representative at the

establishment for the union in question. Table 3 shows that for both types of representatives the most common method of election was by a show of hands at a meeting. Ballots of one kind or another were reported as being used in just over one-third of cases. Since the proportion of representatives elected by ballot (and particularly 'ordinary' representatives who were more numerous in large establishments) is rather higher in large establishments than in small ones, it is probable that the proportion elected by ballot is greater than one-third. This method of election is broadly in line with the 1966 Donovan survey of manual stewards which reported that a show of hands was more than twice as frequent as a ballot; although if there was a trend between 1966 and 1980 it is likely that it was a modest one in the direction of balloting, no doubt reflecting non-manual unions' greater use of ballots.

Beside their method of appointment respondents were also asked whether, once elected, they were required to submit to periodic re-election. Two questions were asked: one relating to the technical requirements of their union, (statements in rule books, standing orders and so on), and the other relating to normal practice. Table 3 illustrates that comparison of the two sets of answers (where both were given) showed that about three-quarters of both ordinary and senior representatives (and over half 'sole' representatives) had technically to stand for re-election and that in practice virtually all of them had done so. These findings suggest that the formal requirements of democratic practice were more fully conformed to in 1980 than in manual unions in the 1960s when, for example, in the 1966 survey four-fifths of stewards said

they had technically to stand for re-election although in practice less than two-thirds had done so (Government Social Survey 1968:14).

TABLE 3: PROCEDURES FOR ELECTION OF REPRESENTATIVES

(Expressed as a percentage of representatives belonging to recognised unions):

Method of election	Type of representative		
	Senior	Ordinary	Sole
	Column percentages*		
Show of hands	57	60	49
Postal ballot	11	9	7
Non-postal ballot	23	25	22
Other	4	7	10
No election	2	-	7
No information	3	-	5
Whether any election in previous year			
Election held	68	68	51
Whether representatives technically have to stand for re-election			
Yes	75	76	65
Whether representatives in practice have to stand for re-election			
Yes	74	73	50
Whether two or more candidates	Column percentages		
Always	13	12	13
Mostly or sometimes	16	20	7
Rarely	13	12	12
Never	55	54	64
No information	3	2	4

* column and row percentages do not always add to 100 owing to the rounding of decimal points

The existence of elections does not, of course, imply that the elections were always contested. Indeed, in 1966 only twenty-nine per cent of stewards said they had assumed the position in a contested election, and nearly one half of them apparently had been persuaded to take on the job when no-one else wanted it. Much the

same situation existed with non-manual representatives in 1980. Respondents were asked if there had been representative elections in the last year, whether 'two or more candidates stood for the same post on any occasion' and were given a range of response options. In the case of 'ordinary' representatives, about half said there had indeed been an election, and of these thirty-two per cent said that all or most elections had been contested; that is, about one in five of all respondents (Table 3).

Senior representatives, respondents claimed, were no less likely technically or in practice to have to stand for re-election than other representatives, and the frequency of election was not significantly different. However, sole representatives, normally the only one for their union in their establishment, were more likely never to be opposed in elections. Part of this pattern of variation is explicable in terms of the size of the workforce. Sole representatives tended to exist where there were fewer members to represent and senior representatives where there were sufficient members to require several ordinary representatives; normally in larger establishments.

An indication of whether there was a core of experience within the representatives' organisation was also sought. Respondents were asked about the numbers of representatives resigning or taking up office in the previous year, and whether any of the present representatives at their workplace had been representatives for five years or more. Approximately one-third of respondents stated that union representatives had left office at their establishment in the

previous year and similar proportions that new representatives had been replacements.

Table 4 indicates that 'turnover' among representatives was, perhaps surprisingly, found to be higher at smaller establishments and about one third of representatives had held office for five years or more. Brown et al (1978) by contrast found that annual turnover and length of service among manual stewards increased sharply up to the 500 workers point, after which it remained constant. The results from the 1980 survey, whilst indicating that workforce size is an important influence, suggest that continuity only rises up to the group with 100 to 199 workers after which it declines sharply.

TABLE 4: REPRESENTATIVES LEAVING/TAKING UP OFFICE

(Expressed as a percentage of those establishments where a representative is present)

Workforce size	Mean leaving	Mean replacements	Mean holding office for over 5 years
25-49	20	20	21
50-99	16	18	30
100-199	13	10	32
200-499	14	15	23
500-999	16	17	17
1000+	14	13	18

However, it is unclear whether this phenomenon is to do with the size of the workforce itself, or with the size of the representatives' organisation. Moreover, such indicators of a well-developed workplace organisation as contested elections and length of tenure of office may reflect member satisfaction as much as centralised control. They nevertheless do provide some further

insight into workplace organisation, albeit an insight which has to be treated with a degree of caution.

Summary

This section has shown that the 1980 survey provided clear support for the commonly held view of manual stewards that the existence of well-developed non-manual workplace organisations was strongly associated with the size of a workplace. Particularly in larger establishments senior and full-time representatives existed and appeared to have strong procedural recognition. Despite evidence of formal committees and regular meetings, joint representatives' meetings were reported in only a minority of workplaces, but were more likely in larger establishments. Whether or not meetings of representatives in multi-establishment organisations could be compared with manual 'combine committees' in the formal sense, they occurred in almost one half of cases and more often in the larger, but not necessarily the largest, enterprises.

However, other sources of explanation for the pattern of workplace organisations require examination. For example, particular levels of pay bargaining were strongly associated with the presence of union representatives. There were also marked contrasts in some of the responses of representatives as between those from manufacturing, the public services, nationalised industries and private services. Furthermore, important differences were found between different types of union branches. This chapter now turns to these and other sources of relationships besides workforce size

which might be expected to help explain differences in the pattern of workplace organisations.

The Influence of Bargaining Levels

The overall pattern

For purposes of describing and analysing the formal institutional structures that influence rates of pay among non-manual workers, this section distinguishes between three main types of workplace. Firstly, where negotiations occurred between employers and trade unions at the national or industry level. Secondly, at the company level between a particular employer and the recognised union(s). Within nationalised industries, of course, national or industry bargaining and company or corporation bargaining tend to be the same. (At lower levels, multi-employer bargaining sometimes takes place at regional or district levels and company bargaining at divisional levels. The very small number of establishments involved in this survey that bargained at these levels does not permit a meaningful separate analysis of establishment characteristics in relation to workplace organisations). Beyond the company level there was a further stage of negotiations at the workplace.

The number of different levels of bargaining that have direct or indirect influence upon the pay of workers varies from workplace to workplace, as does the relative importance of the different levels in terms of the comparative influence that they may have over

workplace organisations. As has been suggested elsewhere it would be unwise to conclude that the absence of workplace bargaining on pay precludes it on other matters, but undoubtedly where pay is largely determined at the workplace it is usually a very important focus of attention (Brown et al 1978). This section, therefore, addresses itself to the question: 'is the level of bargaining over pay and the range of issues apart from pay associated with a well-developed non-manual workplace organisation ?'.

As might be expected there were sharp differences in the different levels of bargaining between the public and private sectors generally. Even within the private sector there were very marked differences in the level of bargaining. In addition the coverage of the 1980 survey was much more extensive in terms of the industries and sectors covered than previous research. This diversity creates a problem for any analysis of the association of bargaining levels with workplace organisations. Consequently for the purpose of cross-tabulation the forty industries and sectors coded under the Minimum List Heading have been recoded into four groups: manufacturing, nationalised industries, public services, and private services.

Where a formalised pay bargaining structure existed, questions were asked about the levels at which pay bargaining took place. The overall pattern is shown in Table 5. It reveals that the level at which pay was most frequently negotiated was national or industry-wide. At the remainder of establishments negotiations at the level of the employer/organisation, rather than at the establishment/plant,

were the most frequent. However, there were major variations in the apparent importance of pay bargaining levels on the pattern of representatives' organisations and these differences meant that other factors might be more important than bargaining levels.

TABLE 5: REPRESENTATIVE ORGANISATION BY PAY BARGAINING LEVELS

(Expressed as a percentage of those establishments where appropriate representative/meeting is present):

Indicators of representative organisation	Level of pay bargaining:- National/ Ind.	Employer/ Org.	Establishment/ Plant	No Information
Acknowledged senior representative	42	30	23	5
Full-time representative present	46	29	23	2
Regular joint representative committee meetings	44	27	20	9
Regular joint representative meetings	44	20	29	7
Regular single union representative meetings	42	29	24	5
Combine meetings (single employer)	66	34	10	-
Combine meetings (multi-employer)	60	21	11	8

Organisational features

No obvious relationship between pay bargaining level and a well-developed workplace organisation was apparent in the survey. In fact the existence of senior or full-time representatives was more likely to be related to national or industry bargaining than to company or establishment bargaining. However, this is hardly a surprising finding in view of the fact that non-manual workplace organisation is a more recent development than the determination of pay bargaining levels. Similarly, there was a strong tendency for

the presence of joint representatives' committees to be associated with national or industry pay bargaining. However pay is only one of the issues with which such committees deal.

Table 5 shows that of those respondents who reported that representatives were acknowledged by management as senior representatives, in just over forty per cent of cases bargaining was at national or industry level. For about one in three bargaining took place at the level of the employer and slightly less than one in four at establishment level. Full-time representatives were considerably less common than senior representatives but there was similarity in their bargaining level distribution. Broadly speaking the proportion of respondents reporting the existence of a full-time representative and the associated pay bargaining levels were the same as that for an acknowledged senior representative.

There was also a strong tendency for the presence of a joint representatives' committee to be associated with pay bargaining at the national or industry level. Furthermore, the occurrence of less formal joint representative meetings, single union and combine meetings were all more likely where pay bargaining was at the level of national or industry. Thus a striking feature of these findings is the extent to which the level of bargaining was associated with the existence of senior, full-time representatives, or both and the occurrence of representatives' meetings. Because this pattern was so similar detailed analysis has been omitted to avoid repetition. However, the similarity of the pattern also represents a finding of substance and importance, for it illustrates that workplace

representatives' bodies can and do develop despite their inability to influence pay directly.

The level at which pay bargaining occurs is also strongly related to similar characteristics of manual shop steward organisation. As the number of stewards increases there is a greater probability of single-employer, and particularly corporate, bargaining. In addition, as the index of a well-developed steward organisation rises, multi-employer bargaining becomes less common. Regular steward meetings are particularly common where plant bargaining takes place, full-time stewards where corporate bargaining occurs. Overall, steward organisation is rather more developed in the latter than in the former type of situation (Batstone 1984:204).

On the other hand, the data from the 1980 survey seem to suggest that a bargaining structure that offers non-manual representatives scope for more directly influencing pay does not necessarily lead to the development of a well-developed representatives' organisation. For example, there were major variations in the apparent importance of different levels between various industries and sectors. Therefore other factors may be more important than bargaining levels.

Table 6 shows a slight decline between just over forty per cent respondents reporting an acknowledged senior representative in manufacturing and one in three in public services; but a more substantial decline to thirteen per cent in nationalised industries and eleven per cent in private services. It is interesting to note

that this figure for manufacturing is lower than the sixty-one per cent for the same group found in the 1978 survey (Brown 1981:64). There was a different distribution of full-time representatives; forty-six per cent of establishments where such a representative was present were in manufacturing, twenty-nine per cent in public services, twenty per cent in private services and only six per cent in nationalised industries.

TABLE 6: REPRESENTATIVE ORGANISATION BY SECTORS

(Expressed as a percentage of those establishments where appropriate representative/meeting is present):

Indicators of representative organisation	Sectors			
	Manufacturing Ind.	Nationalised Ind.	Public Services	Private Services
Acknowledged senior representative	43	13	33	11
Full-time representative present	46	6	29	20
Regular joint representative committee meetings	40	12	45	6
Regular joint representative meetings	45	14	37	3
Regular single union representative meetings	44	13	37	8
Combine meetings (single-employer)	31	17	45	7
Combine meetings(multi-employer)	29	12	47	12

It can also be seen from Table 6 that where a joint representatives' committee existed and various representatives' meetings occurred, there was a striking comparison between establishments in manufacturing and public services, and those in nationalised industries and private services. Joint representatives' committees were considerably more common in the former; over forty per cent in both manufacturing and public services, and twelve per cent and six

per cent in nationalised industries and private services respectively. Joint representatives' meetings were even less common in private services (three per cent) than formal committees. However these less formal meetings were more likely to take place in manufacturing (forty-five per cent). Moreover, single and multi-union meetings were also more often reported by representatives in manufacturing and public services, although there was a variation across industries and sectors in relation to the existence of these meetings. Within manufacturing representatives reported the existence of single union meetings more often than representatives in other sectors; but the sector reporting 'combine' meetings most frequently was public services. These latter type of meetings, and at least in their heartland in manufacturing industry, are traditionally associated with company pay bargaining (Brown 1981:68). Yet non-manual combine meetings were more likely in the public sector where pay bargaining occurred at national or industry level, presumably because of their frequent occurrence in education, the health service, and local and national government.

Table 6 indicates several distinctions between the pattern of workplace organisation in the private and public sectors which require comment here, but will be discussed in more detail when extending analysis of workplace organisation into the context of the wider union. Firstly, the private sector as a whole is less highly unionised than either manufacturing or the public sector. Although, of course, some private companies are completely unionised at the manual level, even in large companies few have the high degree of union membership found in the public sector amongst non-manual

groups. Secondly, public sector pay bargaining remains highly centralised whilst bargaining in the private sector has become increasingly decentralised, although in manufacturing retaining aspects of an industry-wide structure. Although important differences exist in the public sector between central government, the National Health Service and the various local government services (for example, education, social services and so on), public services exhibit a degree of similarity that allows a useful generalisation to be made here. In the private sector, large numbers of separate employers with different economic situations, have resulted in diverging collective bargaining and industrial relations conditions within industries. In the public services there is only a single employer in most instances, and where there are many, as in local government, the standardising influence of central government on local unit decision-making has made local authorities act in concert *vis-à-vis* their workers. The result has been a significant degree of formal organisation emerging in the public services, with few exceptions. But in the private service sector, for example 'in banking, insurance, transport and distribution, dispersion and mobility of workforces make any arrangements that are not company-wide impractical' (Sisson 1983:145). Collective bargaining is a relatively recent experience for many of these workers and few have the tradition of workplace organisation of workers in, say, engineering.

However, pay is, of course, only one of the issues with which workplace organisations deal and some further light can be shed by analysing the pattern of organisation in relation to the scope of

bargaining at the establishment. In this analysis a variable has been created which measures the greatest number of issues in any bargaining group.

TABLE 7: REPRESENTATIVE ORGANISATION BY NUMBER OF ISSUES NEGOTIATED

(Expressed as the greatest number of issues negotiated in any bargaining group):

Indicators of representative organisation	Number of issues (out of a possible 10)
Acknowledged senior representative	7.8
Full-time representative present	8.4
Regular joint representative committee meetings	8.4
Regular joint representative meetings	8.2
Regular single union representative meetings	7.7
Combine meetings (single employer)	8.1
Combine meetings (multi-employer)	8.1

In Table 7 it is apparent that the number of issues bargained over is highest where a full-time representative is present and a joint representatives' committee exists, compared with the existence of any other type of representatives' meeting. The range of bargaining can be investigated more fully by analysing whether representatives negotiated particular issues. Table 8 shows the extent to which representatives negotiated a list of issues. The results illustrate that physical working conditions and redeployment within the establishments were at the top of the list of issues negotiated between representatives and management.

TABLE 6: ISSUES NEGOTIATED APART FROM PAY

(Establishments where a representative is present):

The issues fall into 3 groups:

Those in which the majority of representative organisations negotiated:
- physical working conditions
- redeployment

Those in which about half of representative organisations negotiated:
- recruitment
- staffing levels
- redundancies
- production changes

Those which were rarely negotiated by the representative organisations:
- holidays
- length of working week
- pensions
- capital investment

Whilst some caution is required in explaining these results from the 1980 survey, it is possible to make some suggestions from Tables 7 and 8. Firstly, the range of bargaining increases where workplace organisation is more developed. Here the presence of the full-time representative is particularly significant. Secondly, because of the association of the more formal committees with a wider range of bargaining, this suggests that they tend to negotiate on holidays, the length of the working week, or both, whereas the other type of meetings do not. In addition, workplace organisation influence over production changes and redundancies are rated considerably higher in establishments where more issues are the subject of negotation.

In sum, the range of negotiation tends to be greater where workplace organisation is more developed. This is true as far as

negotiations over work organisation issues and the work process are concerned. It is thus quite clear that workplace organisations can and do develop without necessarily having the ability to exert a direct influence on pay. Moreover, a wider range of bargaining is likely to constitute a significant means of representative influence which imposes a check upon management freedom.

Summary

The presence of senior and full-time representatives was significantly more common where there was national or industry pay bargaining and these type of representatives were more frequent in manufacturing and public services. The occurrence and frequency of non-branch representatives' meetings were also closely associated with these two characteristics of bargaining levels and industrial sectors. However, the weak statistical association between single establishment representatives' meetings and establishment level pay bargaining suggests that these meetings covered other issues besides pay. Further analysis in relation to the scope of bargaining has thrown more light on their functions. General conditions in the workplace, transfers, staffing levels, and changes in working methods are some of the most common issues handled by single establishment representatives. The more intensive research in the case studies analysed in the subsequent chapters confirms this finding.

The propensity for representatives to form links between establishments within multi-plant companies (single and multi-

employer) clearly depends to a considerable extent upon the employers' choice of pay bargaining level. In the survey it was found that 'combine' meetings commonly occurred where there was national or industry bargaining. The explanation is almost certainly similar to that advanced regarding manual stewards (Brown 1981). That is, representatives' organisations with traditions of strong and independent workplace bargaining are either inhibited from or have less need to form effective coalitions with representatives in other establishments. It is where a workplace organisation has less capacity to act independently, as where national or industry level bargaining is predominant, that 'combine' meetings may be more necessary and easier to develop and sustain. Previous research into manual unions has demonstrated that the wider union can also be an important influence on the existence and development of workplace organisation. In the following section, therefore, workplace organisations are analysed in relation to the trade unions to which representatives belonged.

Workplace Organisations and their Unions

Representatives have to come to terms with the local unit of decision-making, in many cases the branch, and their relationship with their union's full-time official(s). This link between representatives' organisations at the workplace and the wider union will now be examined, beginning with the unions of which the representatives were members, then with the local units of their unions, and finally the amount of contact between representatives and the full-time officials of their unions.

Range of unions

The five trade unions most frequently mentioned by representatives were NALGO, ASTMS, APEX, ACTSS and TASS. Overall there was a clear association between this distribution of representatives and unions and workplace organisations. For example, representatives from these five unions accounted for over one half of those reporting the existence of a senior representative. For this reason the analysis here focusses upon the pattern of workplace organisations in these five unions. As well as having the largest number in the sample, representatives from ASTMS and NALGO more frequently reported the existence of the characteristics of well-developed workplace organisations.

Workplace organisation

Table 9 shows that variation in union representatives stating that senior representatives existed at their establishment demonstrated that ASTMS and NALGO between them accounted for just under two out of three in the sample (just over half of the establishments had senior representatives), with the remainder fairly evenly distributed between APEX, ACTSS and TASS. The proportion of representatives from these unions reporting a full-time position that had been in existence since 1977 showed that one-third were members of ASTMS and slightly less of NALGO, about one in five APEX and the rest in TASS and ACTSS. Where there had been full-time representatives for longer periods, however, they were most likely to be found in APEX and to a lesser extent in TASS and ASTMS; with the smallest

proportion in ACTSS and NALGO: a measure perhaps of the more recent development of local organisation by NALGO (see Chapter 6).

TABLE 9: REPRESENTATIVE ORGANISATION BY TRADE UNIONS

(Expressed as a percentage of those unions where appropriate representative/meeting is present);

Indicators of representative organisation	Union of representatives				
	NALGO	ASTMS	APEX	ACTSS	TASS
Acknowledged senior representative	30	30	12	12	12
Full-time representative present	28	33	17	6	11
Regular joint representative committee meetings	36	32	16	7	8
Regular joint representative meetings	21	18	25	18	14
Regular single union representative meetings	29	28	13	10	13
Combine meetings (single-employer)	49	23	9	7	10
Combine meetings (multi-employer)	52	25	12	7	7

Asked about the existence of committees of representatives from their own union and other unions present at the establishment, representatives from ASTMS and NALGO, relative to their greater numbers, most often reported such committees. (Weighting of the data was used to compensate for the different response rates among the sample of unions). Where two or more unions were present at these meetings representatives were almost twice as likely to be members of either of these two unions than APEX, and more than three times than ACTSS or TASS. Again, ASTMS and NALGO representatives reported more frequent meetings than those of APEX, ACTSS and TASS.

The proportion of representatives from 'single union establishments' reporting meetings of representatives, apart from branch meetings, was again highest in ASTMS and MALGO; approximately one in three in both. These characteristics associated with the occurrence of non-branch meetings were also associated with their frequency; a higher proportion of representatives from ASTMS and MALGO reported regular meetings than those from TASS, APEX and ACTSS.

Multi-establishment single employer meetings of representatives were also more often reported in MALGO and ASTMS; just over one in three from the former and slightly less in ASTMS. The union with the most frequent such meetings was again MALGO, which accounted for almost one half of regular single employer 'combine' meetings.

Table 9 indicates that MALGO also had the greatest proportion of representatives reporting multi-employer 'combine' meetings; and there was even a slightly stronger association between the frequency of these meetings and MALGO compared with single employer combines. This gives further support to the observation that such meetings in non-manual unions are more common when pay bargaining occurs at national level.

This analysis of the distribution of representatives and unions, and workplace organisations shows on the one hand ASTMS and MALGO with a workplace hierarchy of representatives and regularly held meetings; on the other, APEX, ACTSS and TASS with less developed workplace representatives' organisations. Of course, national union rules, policies and content of agreements are likely to exert

influence by aiding or restricting the development of these organisations but such characteristics are beyond the scope of this examination of the 1980 survey and will be discussed when analysing the case study material. However, because union constitutions are likely to be an important determinant of local union structure, this characteristic will be returned to in the summary of this section.

Local units

Another significant influence on workplace organisation is likely to be the union branch. Research has highlighted, for example, the importance of branch as opposed to manual shop steward organisation in the public sector. Boraston et al found that 'in branches catering mainly or entirely for public employees plant organisations scored relatively badly and branch organisation relatively well' (compared with private manufacturing) (1975:77); and Fryer and his colleagues (1974) reported that the branch was often the main focus of such local activity as existed, but despite efforts to increase links with stewards it remained under-developed. However, more recently in a study of local government Terry concluded 'that the clear distinction between branch and shop steward organisation is beginning to become a little blurred, and this almost certainly reflects attempts to cope with conflicting logics that multi-union organisation is necessary in local authorities and that branch organisation is useful in an industry in which membership is widely dispersed' (1981:33). Thus there were signs in manual unions that moves to overcome the difficulties posed by geographical dispersion were being made.

The main characteristics of union branches examined in the 1980 survey were their size, the composition of their membership and their general attendance levels. The term 'branch' for local units of the union is used here although some unions have a different term. Representatives seemed to find the question on branch size particularly difficult to answer. Overall over one quarter could provide no estimate, surely a point worthy of note in its own right. Typically (the median) representatives belonged to a branch of three hundred or so members. About one half of branches were within the range from 100 to 900 members. Table 10 shows that individual trade unions varied considerably in terms of their typical branch size, but this is very much a matter of the composition of the branch which will now be examined.

Branch composition can also be compared in the table below in terms of three main types: workplace-based branches where all members of the union in question were employed at the same establishment, single employer branches where membership was drawn from more than one establishment of the same employer, and multi-employer branches. (The last two categories are sometimes referred to as 'geographically-based' branches).

TABLE 10: SIZE AND COMPOSITION OF UNION BRANCHES

	Union of representatives:				
Number of branch members	AUEW	ASTMS	APEX	ACTSS	TASS
Average	1253	716	273	244	471
Median	494	657	116	88	521
(column percentages of representatives belonging to union)					
Branch composition					
Own workplace	12	7	39	34	20
Own workplace plus others of same employer	68	21	13	32	11
Multi-employer	15	67	45	27	67
No information	5	6	2	8	2

Branches were more commonly single employer, partly a reflection of their tendency to occur more frequently in the public sector, where non-manual workers are more numerous (Bain and Price 1983:11). Thus the typical NALGO branch was single employer, ACTSS and APEX had the most workplace-based branches, while ASTMS and TASS largely had multi-employer branches. Overall, there seemed to be a clear association between branch size and composition. Workplace-based branches were reported as being considerably smaller than 'geographically-based' ones. This is apparent from the five individual unions, but also when these two characteristics are directly related. The median size of workplace-based branches was fifty-four members, compared with 320 members for all types of branch.

Table 10 also indicates some differences between the private and public sectors. In some areas of the public sector, notably the civil service, the Post Office and the energy industries, some form of workplace representation has a long history. But in other parts, particularly local government, health and education representative organisation is of much more recent origin (see Clegg 1979:33-38). While NALGO also has arrangements for a steward system, the structure of workplace organisation in local government, hospital and other services covered by NALGO membership, is generally more similar to that of the civil service than to manufacturing industry. Workplace representatives are part of the branch organisation and report to the branch secretary. Of course many branches cover workers of an authority, or of a hospital, or of

a department within it, so that the branch secretary can fulfil the role of senior representative. This situation can be attributed, at least in part, to the dispersion of the workforce in small sections in many public services, for example, in local government.

On the other hand, there is a considerable difference between the public sector and manufacturing. One of the reasons for the higher proportion of workplace branches reported in APEX and ACTSS is that in many instances the workforce was covered by a single organisation concentrated in a single site. Although APEX has members in a range of industries the majority of its membership is located in the engineering industry. ACTSS is the non-manual section of the TGWU representing workers mostly from manufacturing industries and in particular automotive trades.

Workplace organisation in ASTMS and TASS is different again from MALGO and APEX and ACTSS. Whilst a large number of members are in the engineering industry, ASTMS is represented in every major industry and also in smaller ones. TASS also now represents a wide range of workers and has broadened its scope from its original base of drafters and tracers. It now includes secretaries, clerks, typists, systems analysts, supervisors and engineers. Thus in many instances the ASTMS and TASS membership were covered by multi-workplace organisation: not concentrated in a single site but dispersed over an area.

As well as being generally smaller, workplace branches were reported as having different patterns of attendance. In essence, workplace

branches were typically attended by a much higher proportion of members than geographically-based branches; about one-third compared with about one-twentieth. Multi-employer branches generally had lower attendances than single employer branches. Indeed the pattern of attendance at branch meetings appears to have an obvious link with the ease of communications between officers and members and the ease of travel. Meetings of workplace branches, the majority of which were held at the workplace, presented the fewest problems in these respects and had highest attendances.

The association between the frequency of meetings and the generally lower levels of attendance may also have significance. Workplace branches typically met less than once very two months whereas multi-employer branches met more often than every month. A further suggestion, to be expected, is that representatives attend branch meetings much more frequently than the typical branch member, especially in geographically-based branches. A similar difference was observed in the 1966 Donovan survey of manual stewards. Unfortunately, because of the different sampling base and definitions of respondents, it is impossible to say whether this difference widened or narrowed in the period between 1966 and 1980.

Local units and representatives' organisations

Acknowledged senior representatives and full-time representatives were more likely to be members of a single employer branch. Table 11 indicates that almost two-thirds and more than one half

respectively stated that such branches existed compared with workplace and multi-employer branches. The majority of regular establishment and multi-establishment meetings were also said to occur where the branch consisted of single employer members; over two in three regular meetings were from such branches.

Questions were asked about the importance of the branch for meeting other representatives. There were slight differences between the replies where senior representatives and full-time representatives existed, although there was a measure of agreement in that fewer than one in ten representatives, where either category existed, thought that branch meetings were of any help in meeting other representatives. Where a 'committee within the establishment of representatives from several unions' existed, a slightly higher proportion (on in nine) thought that branch meetings were important for meeting other representatives, compared with other types of meeting.

TABLE 11: REPRESENTATIVE ORGANISATION BY UNION BRANCHES

(Expressed as a percentage of union branches where appropriate representative/meeting is present)

Indicators of representative organisation	Type of branch			
	Workplace	Single employer	Multi-employer	No information
Acknowledged senior representative	22	59	12	7
Full-time representative present	23	51	17	9
Regular joint representative committee meetings	23	63	7	7
Regular joint representative meetings	28	58	7	7
Regular single union representative meetings	25	56	13	6
Combine meetings (single employer)	18	59	11	12
Combine meetings (multi-employer)	26	55	10	9

The results here clearly indicate marked contrasts between different types of union branches and the development in workplace organisations. Branches based at the workplace were smaller and meetings were attended by a higher proportion of members than branches encompassing members from several workplaces or employers. In all types of branch, but especially geographically-based ones, representatives were much more frequent in their attendance than were other branch members. Where a well-developed workplace organisation existed it was closely associated with 'single employer' branch structure, whereas less-developed workplace organisations appear to be associated with both workplace-based and multi-employer branches.

One question posed by these results from the 1980 survey is that of the part played by union structure in influencing workplace organisations. Collective bargaining for non-manual workers in manufacturing industry is concentrated mainly at employer or company level, but either way it is in many instances fragmented, especially in engineering and chemicals. It is common in large engineering plants for ASTMS to represent supervisors, middle managers and some groups of technicians; for TASS to represent draughtsmen and associated grades; and for either APEX, ACTSS, or both, to represent clerical workers. Furthermore, each of the several grades represented by ASTMS may have its own branch which negotiates separately from the others. District councils and industrial and company conferences are also held by these and a number of other unions.

But workplace organisation can also play its part in unions with centralised bargaining arrangements with a single employer. For example, unions representing central government and the Post Office workers are highly centralised with no or few full-time officials outside their head offices. Most of the branches are single employer branches, and the branch representatives'

> *everyday work.....consists of dealing with the grievances of members. The sort of things which occur constantly at work - a quarrel between a member and his superior, a protest over a sacking or other disciplinary action,.....are dealt with by [these] local officials* (Moran 1974:93).

In these centralised unions, therefore, it is possible to find equivalents for the features of union organisation in manufacturing: an official status in the union for workplace organisations which also possess some independent authority of their own as bargaining bodies; and the representation for these workplace organisations in the union's body. Such branch representatives and officers derive their position and authority almost entirely from the unions and members. They lack the independent authority of senior representatives who negotiate with establishment managers but are in a position to obtain important benefits for the members in their establishment, and probably have considerable influence over decisions to strike or operate other sanctions in the establishment (Clegg 1979).

Well-developed branch organisations in single employer situations can be seen to give opportunities for representatives to be involved in decisions over union government and bargaining activities which would otherwise be dealt with by central and regional unionism.

Such activities are those that are settled by company or industry bargaining and conducted by representatives in less-developed branch organisations in plant and multi-employer situations.

However, in the 1980 survey, formal branch meetings were generally thought to be of little importance for meeting other representatives in all three types of branches. Thus the branch appears to serve a more important function for small concentrated workforces and in dispersed multi-employer establishments. But, particularly in MALGO, where size permits the development of workplace organisations, the occurrence of both active branches and well-developed workplace organisations is common.

Thus the analysis of the data on branch and workplace organisations encompasses two related but distinct areas: the workplace, and the internal union government. In ACTSS and APEX, for example, the place of work is the natural basis for branch organisation and in this situation the branch officials are also the workplace negotiators. Alternatively, in MALGO where the membership of a branch is drawn from a number of workplaces, the Whitley machinery has encouraged workplace representation and the union has provided these workplaces with a formal link to the branch. The 'group' system within ASTMS operates in a similar way; and even in TASS where branches are generally geographically rather than workplace-based, there is provision for representatives to sit on district committees. Another significant influence exerted on these organisations by the wider union is the relationship between

representatives and full-time officials; and it is to this the examination turns in the final part of this section.

Representatives' contact with full-time officials

The amount of contact between manual workplace representatives and the full-time officials (FTOs) of their union was a matter explored in the Donovan survey and subsequently by other researchers (for example, Boraston et al 1975, Brown et al 1978). The Donovan survey was of shop stewards in general and did not seek to distinguish senior from ordinary stewards. However, the subsequent research did make that distinction. The representatives in the 1980 survey were senior or 'sole' representatives and they were asked about only their own contact with FTOs. Additional questions asked the frequency of their contact with FTOs and management together and secondly, with national officials or their union head office.

Typically (the median figure) senior representatives had contacted their local FTO twice over the previous year. As can be seen in Table 12, the results showed a strong association with the numbers of workers at the establishment. Representatives from the larger workplaces had more frequent contact. Further analysis showed that frequency of contact was similar across the public and private sectors, in both manufacturing and service sectors, and in the five unions selected for specific analysis. Furthermore, no association was observed with the level(s) of pay bargaining for the group of workers represented by the representative.

TABLE 12: CONTACT BETWEEN REPRESENTATIVES AND FULL-TIME OFFICIALS

(Establishments where representative is present)

	All establishments	No. of full-time non-manual employees					
		25-49	50-99	100-199	200-499	500-999	1000+
Number of meetings with local full-time official	2	1	1	2	3	4	10
Number of meetings with local full-time official and management	-	-	-	-	1.5	2	7
Proportion who contacted their national official or union head office	45	45	46	49	59	60	63

The implications of these results is that contact between senior representatives and FTOs is not confined to the main periodic pay negotiations, but is more often in connection with a variety of problems affecting individuals or particular sections of the workforce. Possibly union officials were quite commonly brought in by management to help settle grievances and disputes when the initial stages of formal procedures had failed to resolve a problem. It is likely that contact between senior representatives and FTOs was often a precursor to these more formal interventions.

Table 12 also shows that meetings involving senior representatives, FTOs and management were considerably less frequent than meetings between representatives and FTOs. Most senior representatives reported none of these trilateral meetings in the past year. But where these meetings had occurred they always involved the representatives of the largest workforces; there were

no apparent sectoral or union differences, nor was there any clear association with the level of pay bargaining.

It might be expected that meetings between senior representatives, FTOs and management, being relatively rare occurrences, would take place when serious problems at the establishment were at issue. No direct questions were asked in the survey about what was discussed and when, but this suggestion was tested indirectly in relation to the occurrence of industrial action. The result showed that the occurrence of industrial action was associated with the frequency of contact between senior representatives and FTOs. However, both variables were positively related to size. When workforce size was controlled in the analysis there was still a slight tendency for more frequent meetings to occur in establishments with experience of industrial action. There was also a fairly strong association between the occurrence of industrial action and the frequency of meetings between senior representatives, FTOs and management. When examined in relation to workforce size, however, this turned out to be confined to small and medium size workforces (less than 500 workers). In establishments above this size it was common for there to be a full-time representative. In these establishments fewer meetings with local union officials and management took place.

The final result indicated in Table 12 is the contact between senior representatives and their national officials or union head office. Senior representatives reported having such contact over the previous year in just under one half of establishments. Again, the occurrence of such contact was associated with large workplaces; and

the senior representatives more often reported contact with national officials than did sole representatives. Head office contact occurred more often where bargaining was at the level of the whole organisation (fifty-five per cent) than where it was at the establishment level (thirty-eight per cent). The same was true when only private sector establishments were considered. In addition, contact by representatives occurred more often in smaller establishments which had experienced industrial action, but less often in larger workplaces that had experienced such action.

Workplace organisation and full-time officials

Two main points emerge when analysing workplace organisation and contact with FTOs. Table 13 shows, firstly, the proportion of representatives holding meetings at least every three months is strongly associated with frequent contact with union officials and a national official or union head office. On approximately two in three of the occasions where there was such contact the senior representatives were from establishments where representatives' meetings were held on a regular basis. Secondly, there seems to be a weak association between regular representatives' meetings and frequent 'joint meetings' with senior representatives, FTOs and management. The proportion of representatives replying that a senior representative had met management with an FTO was the reverse here. Approximately two in three were from establishments where representatives' meetings were held less often than once every six months.

TABLE 13: REPRESENTATIVE ORGANISATION AND CONTACT WITH FULL-TIME OFFICIALS

(Expressed as a percentage of those establishments where appropriate representative/meeting is present):

Indicators of representative organisation	Contact with full-time officials: Meetings with local official	Meetings with local official and management	Contact with national official or head office
Acknowledged senior representative	73	59	51
Full-time representative present	31	22	20
Regular joint representative committee meetings	63	21	65
Regular joint representative meetings	73	47	70
Regular single union representative meetings	60	26	55
Combine meetings (single employer)	62	19	54
Combine meetings (multi-employer)	76	46	70

Summary

Contact with local FTOs by senior representatives appeared to arise from a variety of issues and be more frequent with larger establishments. Where meetings also involved management there was a suggestion that establishments were more likely to have experienced industrial action during the same period. Although the analysis of the 1980 survey data sharply contrasts with reports on manual stewards of more frequent contact in manufacturing than in the public service, nevertheless the evidence here does support the conclusions of Brown et al (1978) that FTOs maintain close links with well-developed workplace organisations. Moreover, the senior representatives who actually contacted their

officials tended to come from the larger workforces with more experienced representatives.

Collective Conflict

At the beginning of this chapter three factors likely to be associated with the patterns of workplace organisations were identified: size of the workforce, bargaining levels, and the wider union. The clear impression left by the 1980 survey is that non-manual workplace organisation is widespread, and uniformly associated with workforce size, bargaining levels, and the wider union. The significance of these factors cannot of course be understood without taking account of the quality or depth of workplace bargaining and power. However, information from the survey is too formal to permit patterns of quality or depth to be identified and explained. An exception of the 'challenge from below' is the most conspicuous aspect of power in workplace bargaining: industrial action. In this final section, therefore, the association of workplace organisation with industrial action is analysed.

Questions in the survey sought to broaden the available picture of strikes to include the incidence of overtime bans, go-slows and so on. In broad terms, about one-in-four of establishments were reported as having experienced some form of industrial action amongst non-manual workers in the year up to mid-1980. Non-manual workers were more likely than manual workers to take non-strike action, particularly work-to-rules, and blacking of work.

However, all types of industrial action were closely associated with establishment size, (as was the case with the manual workers).

Types and extent of action

A number of questions were asked about the types of industrial action, if any, that had taken place in the previous year, including questions about the number of different incidents, the groups of workers involved, the main reasons for the dispute, and the duration of the action. Taking all strikes, both of less than a whole day and longer as a single category, only one per cent of establishments had experienced two or more strikes by non-manual workers during the year. This proportion was too small to carry out any worthwhile analysis of strike frequency by worker. Such analysis would generally require a much larger sample or a longer reporting period than the one year that was selected. In any case, given the greater unreliability of recollections over longer periods, it is doubtful whether the survey method is appropriate for examining characteristics associated with strike frequency. The same argument applies with even greater force to the other forms of industrial action since individually they affected an even smaller number of establishments.

Therefore, features of the most recent strike or other industrial action reported at the establishment need to be examined, these being the subject of further separate questioning. Although these questions were confined to the most recent dispute, that dispute can nevertheless be said to be typical of all disputes that affected the

sampled establishments because most respondents reported only a single incident of the eight types of action asked about. In consequence, the characteristics of the most recent dispute are likely to mirror the characteristics of all disputes in the year up to mid-1980.

It can be seen in Table 14 that the number of establishments that had experienced some form of industrial action is quite small; especially in the case of non-strike action because the data cover all the types identified. Only overtime bans, work-to-rules, and blackings are numerically significant. The questions separated strikes from other action and it seems that non-manual workers may prefer to resort to more 'subtle' forms of industrial sanction rather than the high risk tactics of the lengthy strike. Hence, in only five per cent of establishments had there been strikes of more than one day, while an equal proportion had experienced short strikes, and almost twice this number the other forms of industrial action. This is also of interest since it is only lengthier strikes which tend to be included in national statistics so that these may underestimate the extent of industrial action by non-manual workers.

The experiences of industrial action in any of the forms distinguished above varied little; by industry, bargaining levels, multi-unionism, presence of agreed procedures or workforce composition. There was, however, a significant 'size effect'. Table 15 shows that strikes were significantly more common in larger establishments, although non-strike action slightly less so. Trade union density and a well-developed workplace organisation

were also positively related to the experience of industrial action. That is, industrial action of all kinds was more common where union organisation, such as union density and representatives' activities, was more developed.

TABLE 14: TYPES AND EXTENT OF INDUSTRIAL ACTION

(Expressed as a percentage of representatives reporting appropriate action)

Type of industrial action	Representatives reporting action
Strike	9
Strike less than one day	5
Strike one day or more	5
Lockout	-
Overtime ban or restriction	9
Work-to-rule	7
Go slow	-
Blacking of work	0
Work in/sit in	-
Other	2

TABLE 15: INDUSTRIAL ACTION BY WORKFORCE SIZE

(Expressed as a percentage of appropriate incidents of action reported)

Type of industrial action	Number of non-manual full-time employees					
	25-49	50-99	100-199	200-499	500-999	1000+
Strike less than one day	5	11	22	11	14	36
Strike one day or more	-	10	18	25	20	30
Lockout	-	-	-	-	-	-
Overtime ban or restriction	2	8	16	18	21	36
Work-to-rule	5	10	18	22	10	37
Go slow	-	-	-	-	-	-
Blacking of work	2	8	27	26	17	21
Work in/sit in	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other	0	8	33	25	17	0

However, the meaning of these observed patterns of association between industrial action and size is unclear. Although it was found that both strike and non-strike industrial action were related to the average size of workforce, it is unclear what this finding

reveals about the choice of different types of action. A further problem with this statistical analysis is that whilst union density, employed as a measure of union strength, was positively associated with strike action, as often pointed out, strong unions may have little need to strike to attain their goals. This point is developed below.

What the survey data does make available is the range of indices, such as the presence of senior and full-time representatives and the occurrence of various committees and meetings, which at least indirectly measures the influence of local union organisations. Table 16 shows clearly that where workplace organisation was fully developed all forms of industrial action were considerably more common. Senior and full-time representatives, and regular representative meetings were strongly related to industrial action. These relationships existed even when the other strong associations discussed previously were controlled.

TABLE 16: INDUSTRIAL ACTION BY REPRESENTATIVE ORGANISATION
(Expressed as a percentage of action where appropriate representative/ meeting is present)

Indicators of representative organisation	Type of industrial action				
	Strike	Overtime ban	Work-to-rule	Blacking	Other
Acknowledged senior representative	73	71	80	73	60
Full-time representative present	86	80	83	89	90
Regular joint representative committee meetings	86	79	89	96	99
Regular joint representative meetings	89	74	88	100	97
Regular single union representative meetings	91	85	92	92	90
Combine meetings (single union)	89	84	89	98	99
Combine meetings (multi-union)	92	82	93	80	96

Thus the survey data confirms that although a well-developed workplace organisation does not mean that strikes will necessarily occur, its presence is necessary if bargaining pressures are to lead to collective conflict. The presence of well-developed workplace organisation is, of course, insufficient to explain either the types or extent of industrial action as the above qualifications show. Some of these points will be developed in the case study analysis in the subsequent chapters. The present purpose is to sound a note of caution about the dangers of isolating factors which appear to cause differences in the overall pattern of industrial action.

Reasons for action

Replies to the question on the reasons for the most recent industrial action were coded using the same broad categories as the Department of Employment's official records of stoppages of work. From Table 17 it can be seen that the predominance of pay issues as the reason for both strikes and other forms of industrial action is readily apparent.

Fewer strike incidents were reported as being over pay issues, but pay was still by far the most common reason given. Redundancy questions were the second most important reason for strike action and seemed almost as likely to take the form of strikes or of other action. The latter also applied to all but two of the remaining types of reason in the classification. The exceptions were staffing and work allocation issues, where non-strike action

featured more predominantly than strikes; and dismissals and disciplinary measures, where non-strike action was hardly used.

TABLE 17: REASONS GIVEN FOR INDUSTRIAL ACTION

(Expressed as a percentage of reasons where specified type of action was reported)§

Reasons given	Type of action	
	Strike of one day or more	Non-strike action
Pay - wage rates and earnings	63	67
Pay - extra wage and fringe benefits	1	9
Duration and pattern of working hours	3	5
Redundancy questions	12	8
Trade union matters	2	6
Working conditions and supervision	-	1
Staffing and work allocation	7	10
Dismissal and other disciplinary measures	3	1
Miscellaneous - including grievance procedures	5	6
No information	12	4

§ Percentages add to more than 100 because more than one answer was possible.

Disputes over staffing and work allocation are presumably unlikely to arise quickly or require immediate resolution. They are more likely to be long-standing issues between management and trade unions with no externally imposed requirements to settle. On the other hand, dismissals and other disciplinary measures, such as transfers or suspensions, require an immediate and quick acting sanction by the workforce if it is to produce any effect, for example, reinstatement.

Duration of action

Questions about the duration of the most recent industrial action and whether it took place on consecutive working days again distinguished between strikes of one day or longer and non-strike action. As expected, non-strike action was carried on for considerably longer periods than strike action; the typical (median) duration being about two weeks. The typical strike lasted about one day. (The median figure for strikes of one day or more is three days. If strikes of less than one day are included the median figure becomes one day. As strikes of less than one day's duration are excluded from the Department of Employment's figures unless more than 100 working days are lost, this suggests a high proportion of unrecorded strikes among non-manual workers). Quite a high proportion, about one-fifth, of incidents of non-strike action lasted two months or more. Where main types of non-strike action were considered separately, there was a suggestion that overtime bans tend to be of longer duration than other types.

Nearly one in three of most strikes of one day or longer involved intermittent stoppages. This figure was without doubt abnormally high because of the industry-wide campaign of one and two day stoppages in the engineering industry which began in August 1979. These can be excluded from the results in a crude way by excluding all strikes which representatives reported as beginning in August. This reduces the proportion of strikes that were intermittent to about one-sixth which is still a high proportion.

A few representatives in various other manufacturing and service sectors reported intermittent strikes, but the numbers affected were too few to permit further analysis. Some non-strike industrial action was also reported as being intermittent; just under ten per cent of incidents came into this category. But again the industrial distribution of these cases was such that no single widespread dispute could account for it.

One important point should be stressed. That is, the extent of the various types of industrial action outlined above is strongly related to establishments with 200 or more non-manual workers. There is no surprise in this: the relationship has been identified before and there are several plausible lines of explanation for its existence. Some have argued that the greater number of communication links between individuals and groups provides more sources of conflict in large workplaces. Others have argued that larger establishments are more bureaucratically managed and that this produces a lower level of commitment to the employing unit by workers. A third line of argument has stressed the greater divisions of labour and fragmentation of tasks in larger units and hence a more alienated workforce (see P.K. Edwards 1982). Evaluating these different explanations is, however, a substantial analytical task beyond the scope of this chapter, but the subsequent chapters will explore this more fully.

Summary

It is possible to conclude from this examination that workforce size and well-developed union organisations appear to be strongly associated with non-manual industrial action. The proportion of representatives reporting strikes and non-strike action increased with size, union density and the presence of senior and full-time representatives who held regular meetings. Intermittent recurrent strikes were more widespread than the national engineering stoppage in 1979 and industrial action other than strikes was a feature of non-manual unionism in particular.

Although there was no tendency for strike experience to be greater when pay determination was at a particular level, industrial action other than strikes was slightly more prevalent where bargaining was at national or industry level. Other than the fact that non-strike action was more commonly taken about issues apart from pay, so that the level at which pay bargaining took place was a less relevant factor, there was also a tendency for this to be largely confined to the public sector; particularly in local and national government and, to a lesser extent, in the health and education services. Strikes are only one form of industrial action and the pattern of other forms of industrial action appears to follow the distribution of strikes.

The degree of bargaining autonomy which a given workplace organisation experiences has been explained in this chapter as a function of the interrelationships between three major variables:

workforce size, structure of collective bargaining and influence of wider trade unions. These variables shed light on why some workplace organisations have more bargaining power than others. Insofar as particular patterns of organisations are influenced by 'external' factors, of course, pressure will be exerted upon unions' activities. This was the essential starting point for the chapter: linking workplace organisations with industrial relations 'structural' characteristics. The final section of this chapter has investigated one way, the use of sanctions, in which workplace organisations seek to use that bargaining power. The link between these organisations and industrial action suggests that they are prepared to use various forms of action, particularly to seek to influence bargaining over pay. However, it was also suggested earlier that unions with strong bargaining power may have little need to use sanctions to attain their goals.

This conclusion is negative but nonetheless important. Industrial action patterns should not be seen as the result of the operation of distinct 'independent variables'. This is not to suggest that none of the possible influences analysed above has any effect, but that the way in which a source of discontent is exercised and augmented is through the power of collective organisation. In the case studies attention was focussed not only upon the influence of workplace organisations through their use of industrial action, but other ways in which they seek to use their influence upon a range of bargaining, including the organisation of work.

Conclusions

The overwhelming conclusion from the 1980 survey is that the formal pattern of non-manual workplace organisation is similar to research findings on their manual counterparts. The tendencies identified in manual shop steward organisation towards centralisation and formalisation were apparent in the pattern of non-manual representatives and their organisations. Both in the representatives' bargaining role and formal hierarchy within their organisations, the impression from the public sector and private manufacturing and to a lesser extent in the private service sector, was that the organisational forms adopted by representatives showed a striking similarity. Particularly in larger workplaces the existence of committee structure and organisational hierarchy was clearly marked. Regular representative meetings, meetings of representative executives and the existence of at least one acknowledged 'senior representative' were quite widespread in such workplaces.

Clearly many detailed factors were important in providing or hindering the development of particular forms of organisation. Indeed, perhaps the clearest results from the evidence were the uniformity of the factors associated with workplace organisations: the importance of size, bargaining levels and wider union. Larger workplaces were strongly associated with the development of centralised and formalised workplace organisation. The likelihood of there being such a well-developed organisation significantly increased where pay bargaining was at national or industry level

and this type of organisation was more common in manufacturing and public services. The weak association between the existence of a well-developed workplace organisation and establishment-level pay bargaining suggests that single-establishment representative meetings were involved with issues other than pay.

Even when there was only one union at the workplace the wider union had a considerable impact on the nature of workplace organisations. Important differences were found between trade union branches whose members were drawn from a single workplace, as in ACTSS and APEX, and branches encompassing members from several workplaces or employers, as in ASTMS and TASS. A 'single employer' branch as in NALGO was much more closely associated with a well-developed workplace organisation. In contrast to research into manual stewards (Brown et al 1978), senior representatives' contact with FTOs was not associated with national level wage bargaining; nor was there more frequent contact in manufacturing than in the public service. However, this formal measurement of the relationship between representatives and FTOs was strongly associated with establishment size. The larger workforces tended to both be more likely to have well-developed workplace organisations and to have contact with their officials.

The final section of this chapter investigated one way in which non-manual workplace organisations seek to use their influence. In view of the growing proportion of non-manual unionists in the labour force, the results analysing the use of sanctions by workplace organisations suggests that the incidence of strikes is no

longer, if it ever was, an adequate measure of the level of overt collective conflict. Broadly speaking, less than one-half of the establishments affected by any type of industrial action were affected by a strike which would have come within the definition used for the official records.

Using tactics such as working-to-rule, blacking of work and so on it it is quite likely that workplace organisations were employing a range of sanctions without causing members to lose money. Non-strike sanctions, of course, are a relatively popular form of pressure because their use can be varied to meet tactical needs as well as putting pressure on management while involving few costs for workers. It is likely that non-strike sanctions are more effective for non-manual than for manual workers because the former do not normally work such rigid hours, but do work unpaid overtime, operate computers and so on. The survey evidence suggests that this development of sanctions depends nevertheless upon the existence of established workplace organisation.

Forms of non-cooperation action, however, have also been used by groups who lack well-developed workplace organisations. This appears to contradict the previous argument of the deployment of sanctions by an established organisation. However, non-strike sanctions are not limited to the pursuit of specific workplace level objectives; and for some non-manual groups withdrawing co-operation can be done relatively easily as part of a specific campaign. Such action is more removed from the workplace members than is the pay

bargaining activity of workers in, say, manufacturing or national government, for which strong local organisation may be essential.

Underlying such formal similarity in both the pattern of workplace organisations and the factors associated with these organisations identified above, however, significant differences persisted between and within industries and sectors. Whilst some features such as size, bargaining levels and so on appear to be closely related to the form of workplace organisation this trend conceals variations. Moreover, to explain why sanctions emerge, strikes as well as non-strike action, it is essential to have an understanding of the workplace relations which, of course, the survey method is unable to provide.

Crucial to an understanding of these factors are three central points which can be assessed within the case studies. Firstly, the differences reveal two broad patterns of organisation: where well-developed workplace organisation existed in traditional areas of union organisation and collective organisation in workforces which could draw upon no historical traditions of such organisation and which are subject to fragmentation.

From the 1980 survey it is possible to suggest that within private manufacturing generally, industries where those features of manual steward and workplace organisation are especially common, for example, in engineering and chemicals, are also well-developed in non-manual unionism. This would largely conform to Batstone's opinion 'that non-manual union organisation in the plant tends to

follow, and probably depends upon, the development of manual union organisation' (1984:232); and gains additional support from the fact that between 1969 and 1979 these were areas of considerable growth (Bain and Price 1983:15). On the other hand, in the public sector, for example in local government and the health services, a dramatic growth of manual steward organisation has occurred as recently as the 1970s (see, for example, Fryer et al 1974 and Terry 1982). These sectors also showed clear evidence in the survey of the formal indicators of well-developed non-manual workplace organisation.

In recent discussions of shop steward organisation, considerable emphasis has been placed upon the significance of management sponsorship. Terry, for example, pointed to 'the existence of "management sponsored" shop steward organisations in many areas of manufacturing industry and the public sector where, until recently, local organisation was limited or non-existent' (1978:6).

It is difficult to differentiate between 'management-sponsored' and 'independent' local union organisations because in most situations there is likely to be a combination of management initiative and worker-union pressure. But it needs to be established whether management have played an important part in fostering the development of workplace organisations in non-manual unions, and, if so, what other factors contribute to, or inhibit, the emergence and pattern of workplace organisation.

The second point is that this picture of workplace organisations has been based upon the results of a survey carried out in mid-1980. That time may prove to have been a turning point for British trade unions. Since the 1979 general election a combination of growing economic crisis and a government more overtly hostile to trade unions than its predecessors has meant a major assault on union organisation in general and workplace organisation in particular (see, for example, Taylor 1982). Helped by the effects of unemployment and recession on union power and organisation some employers have tried to undermine the strength of workplace organisations. Their strategies have made a combined attack on union organisation by reducing the number of full-time representatives and restricting the influence of others by attempts to by-pass them by obtaining workforce opinion directly through ballots. Thus it is a mistake to isolate and analyse influential factors without also considering the effects of wider economic and political circumstances.

What has been the impact of a much-changed economic, industrial and managerial environment on the pattern and influence of workplace organisation in non-manual unions ? Does it follow that workplace organisations are now a thing of the past, or are they associated with considerable activity including, for example, influence over technical change and the organisation of work ?

The third and final point is the ability of workers to resist 'external' influences and to create and develop their own pattern of organisation. In other words, it has been noted here that indices

of union organisation suggest that there has been pressure upon representatives to develop larger and more formal types of organisations. But the apparent 'convergence' across manual and non-manual, and manufacturing and public sectors has concealed important differences which may reflect the ability of some workers to defend jobs and living standards more effectively than others.

6 Workplace Organisation and its Context: The Case Studies

In this chapter the characteristics of the establishments and their union organisations covered in the case studies are outlined. The nature of the labour force is considered; and in particular the number of workers and skill levels are discussed. These factors have, in the past, been found to affect the strength of union organisation. In the larger workplaces, union density is typically higher while the number of representatives also tends to be greater. As a result, there more frequently exists a hierarchy of workplace representatives and means by which the policies and actions of different representatives can be co-ordinated. Similarly, union organisation tends to be more developed among skilled workers.

Despite the general level of unemployment, there were few signs in the case studies that employers had developed a concerted attack upon trade union organisation. Certainly management in one case had become less supportive of trade unions in a number of respects. But levels of support from management for unions in the other studies had not changed substantially. Union membership remained high and the number of representatives, senior representatives and full-time representatives had remained the same, with the result that formal union organisation was just as strong at most workplaces as it had been five years previously. Each of the case studies is considered in turn and then in the subsequent chapter common themes and comparisons which appear to be of particular significance are drawn out.

Telecommunications

This study took place at a group of British Telecom (BT) telephone exchanges which provided switching systems to and from the national network. Telecommunications has an increasingly important part in the economic and industrial fabric of society and in the future information age it will probably dominate all other forms of communication. In the 1980s, the UK network is fully automatic enabling customers to dial their own trunk calls, with international calls dialled directly to over 100 countries. It suffers, however, from a number of constraints, common to other existing networks throughout the world, and these can be summarised as: limited-capacity signalling systems; relatively slow set-up time for multi-link calls; fluctuating transmission quality; lengthy, labour-intensive manufacture and maintenance of equipment.

In the late 1960s, a joint BT/Industry team was studying the fundamental criteria upon which to base on-going switching developments. The study resulted in the foundation of a 'family' system of exchanges using micro-electronic technology, integrated digital transmission and switching, stored program control, and common channel signalling. This system was designed from the start with a clear, deliberate plan in mind: the creation of a total telecommunications system capable of overcoming the limitations of existing networks whilst forming the basis of advanced networks in the future. (For a useful review of this study see British Telecom 1984).

Resulting from the conclusions of this strategic study, a network modernisation policy was produced and endorsed by the BT Board. The main elements were technical and organisational. The key technical changes were the development of equipment in such a way as to maximise the service capabilities, and to provide complementary local switching capability with rapid national expansion. The main organisational changes were that telephone areas were to be recognised and run as business units or 'profit centres'. Line managers were to be given more powers and responsibilities to enable them to act 'swiftly and vigorously to meet the needs of customers in a competitive market' (British Telecom 1983)

The main difference, therefore, between the traditional and the developing telecommunications system, lay in the nature of the control systems. In 1982 two 'natural' business units, National Network Services (NNS) and Local Communications Services (LCS) were formed: NNS to handle the long-haul services; the public switched trunk network service, the telex service, the conventional private circuit networks organised on a national scale, and specialist network services; LCS to manage the local communications services and all other 'customer care' activities.

The division of labour

The two main elements of reorganisation were structure and staffing. The framework of divisions and areas was re-examined and re-shaped to gear the new profit centres to the changing pace of responses to

customers' demands. Traditional staffing methods were to be adapted to enable specialists to work in mixed groups, rather than within their own technical, sales or administrative functions.

A basic blueprint for the future shape of the areas had been drawn up and discussed with general managers, who would adapt it to suit local needs and conditions. Apart from common support units such as personnel, accommodation, press and public relations, pay, billing, finance, catering and administration, each area was to be organised around five main activities: networks, exchanges, customer assistance, consumer products, and business systems. Responsibilities of these units were to be the following. Networks: management of all aspects of service from local exchange to the customer. This would include using, maintaining and ordering cables and equipment; quality service; selling lines to customers and managing participation in any joint cable ventures. Connection and rental charges would be the unit's income and local distribution its assets. Exchanges: responsibility for local exchange services and circuits between exchanges which were not under NNS. Income would be from locally dialled calls, transfer payments from through traffic for NNS; assets would include local exchanges and interconnecting network. Customer assistance: dealing with operator services and directory enquiries. Income would be a portion of operator call revenue, operator service charges (for example, alarm calls) and assets would be the automanual centres. Consumer products: would supply, price, sell and forecast demand for consumer products, telephones and small business systems. Income would arise from sale of apparatus and prime instrument rentals.

Assets would include rented equipment and stocks. Business systems would be the major contact for large businesses, providing project management for services and products, liaising with major account managers and NNS for very large customers. Income would be from sales and rentals and payments for work done for NNS. Assets would be equipment rented, work in progress and stocks.

All these activities involved new challenges and new ways of satisfying customers' demands in a rapidly changing competitive environment. From the viewpoint of management these changes were designed to put telephone areas in the best possible position to respond effectively.

The study covered about 850 technicians working in one of three buildings in close proximity to each other. Almost 700 worked for NNS and 150 for LCS; about ten were women doing clerical work. All technicians worked a nine day fortnight because of the attraction of this system to those who commuted from substantial distances. There was some flexibility in how the agreement was implemented, each union staff representative having negotiated with the local manager.

There was a serious staffing shortage in NNS because of the need to run and maintain the existing system, while undertaking a massive modernisation programme. One result was a very high incidence of overtime; approximately five hours per week for maintenance technicians, and up to twenty hours per week for those working on the construction and installation of the new systems.

The skills required for the new equipment were equal to but different from those for the old: more mental skill to understand how the whole system worked, but less technical skill as most repairs involved changing cards. All technicians had had a basic electronic training package, but only those actually working on the new equipment had received the extensive training required. For many of the new services being provided by NTS, the technician was becoming a technical operator rather than a maintenance technician.

The exchanges were divided into three divisions; construction, installation, and maintenance. In each exchange there was a local manager, a supervisor for each division, and three grades of technician; technical officers, second grade technician (T2A), and trainee technician apprentice (TT(A)). The technical officers were treated as a single pool of labour so far as the construction and installation divisions were concerned, and allocated to one division or another according to the production needs. The T2As were usually allocated to particular divisions on a permanent basis, while TT(A)s would spend part of their allotted training time in a different division.

The hierarchy of grades in NTS and LCS was the same although the technicians worked in separate businesses. The division of tasks and responsibilities were fairly formal, although not rigidly so. The local exchange managers were responsible for allocating people to divisions, forward planning of staffing levels to cover for holidays and, in the case of maintenance, allocation of workers to emergency duties. For this a register of emergency duties

individuals had undertaken was maintained, open for inspection by the divisional supervisors and technical officers, in order to maintain fairness in the allocation of emergency work, which carried additional payment. The exchange managers also received information and instructions from higher management concerning modernisation plans, and for ensuring that they would be carried out. Divisional supervisors were responsible for allocating individuals to particular tasks, performing certain tests on equipment, and monitoring the progress of the division's functions: particularly in terms of the modernisation programmes.

The three technician grades corresponded to jobs of differing responsibility and skill. The technical officers performed three key jobs: installing and testing the operation of new exchange equipment in the case of construction and installation; and fault-finding in the case of maintenance. T2As performed four specific jobs, three of which consisted of working in small teams assisting the technical officers, while the fourth job concerned routine servicing of the existing equipment. TT(A)s were rotated round these different duties. In addition to their normal duties technical officers also carried out training work with T2As and TT(A)s.

This hierarchy of jobs was less rigid in practice than it seems, since lower-grade technicians could stand in for someone on a higher grade and about half of them had received training to permit this. Indeed, there were usually more technical officers' tasks than could be performed by these officers, so that at least one T2A in

each division was invariably 'substituting' as a technical officer. This in turn created the opportunity for a TT(A) to act as a T2A. Moreover, if there was insufficient work for technical officers on maintenance, for example, they could be moved across to work on other duties. There was thus a considerable degree of vertical as well as horizontal flexibility in the performance of normal construction, installation and maintenance work.

Union organisation

The POEU branch to which the telecommunications technicians in the study belonged had a membership density of over ninety-nine per cent. Three members were expelled for refusing to take part in the 1982 BT 'day of action', one technician had refused to join on religious grounds and one was in the process of being recruited. There was a branch committee of thirty-eight, with one representative for each group of technicians (in practice, for every floor in each of the three buildings); only one group was without a representative on the branch committee. This committee met each month in work time. There were nine branch officials (the executive) including chairperson, secretary, financial secretary, assistant secretary, organiser, editor, welfare officer, health and safety officer, and an accommodation officer. The branch secretary worked full-time on union business, partly because of his role as a member of the general purposes committee of the London Regional Council. Some other officials worked on rota and, within a written agreement with management, spent day-time shifts on union business. For example, the assistant secretary and welfare officer worked two-

thirds on union business, and the financial secretary and chairperson half-time. There were no problems over time-off and other officials were able to spend time on union business as required. Regular meetings with management were shared between branch officials as appropriate and available. Branch meetings were held monthly except August and December, at the end of the working day, usually alternating between the three buildings. Attendance had been as low as nineteen, but as high as 200-300 over pay claims or when there was a visiting speaker from head office.

Trade union organisation in the telecommunications study was strongly conditioned by the nature of the employer, as is discussed in detail below. Until the 1980s, the POEU's organisational structure had remained virtually unchanged for thirty years. The conditions of civil service employment, the centralisation of management structure and thus of collective bargaining, and the development of unionism based on the occupational grades in the organisation, can all be linked to the development of the POEU. As Beasley (1976) noted the POEU had a complex sub-structure with union regional councils and area co-ordinating committees bringing branches together to present common area policies.

The branch sent representatives to both the area and the [redacted] co-ordinating committees. There were two other branches in the area co-ordinating committee for LCS: London City internal and London City external. The [redacted] co-ordinating committee covered London District and was rather unwieldy, with two representatives from each of the twenty-five branches, the branch studied and the Post Office

Tower branches having the vast majority of NBS members, whilst other branches had only three or four NBS members. Despite the imminent abolition of the BT regional structure, the London Regional Council seemed certain to remain because of the difficulties of breaking it down. It covered forty branches with 40,000 members and was serviced by a permanent official plus secretary, based at the union's London head office.

The branch's name had been kept since its foundation during the Second World War when the building was the centre of the trunk network. At its peak, 4,000 telephonists and 2,000 technicians worked there, but the death knell of the old system was the building of the Post Office Tower in the 1960s. The branch kept its name even when it became part of the local services; and the creation of NBS had recreated the justification for it.

At the time of the creation of NBS, consideration was given within the branch to a merger with the Post Office Tower Branch, which also had a high concentration of NBS members. The idea was rejected on account of the branch's obligations to its LCS members, and because other areas would provide jobs for redeployed NBS technicians, this had advantages for all concerned. The branch was a very self-contained one because of its nature and location, however, there were close relations with the local branches of the STE, UCW and POEBA.

Sources of power

The branch secretary, like the other lay officials of the branch, was elected and answerable to the branch membership. Thus his authority within the branch arose out of an electoral mandate from the members. Nevertheless, the factors encouraging the centralisation of power within the union at national level (see below) also tended to strengthen the role at local level of the branch secretary and make him into a pivotal figure in the branch.

Firstly, the nature of bargaining generally removed the detailed process of negotiation from the close scrutiny of the other branch officials and of branch membership. While members of the branch committee dealt with conditions and occupational matters, it was the full-time lay secretary who was involved in negotiations with local management and played the leading role. In negotiations the branch secretary was expected to take the lead as both tactician and strategist. This central role was not to be guessed at from the formal definition of his powers and duties in the union rule book which does not even mention his negotiation function (POEU 1980).

Secondly, the branch secretary also had a special role in maintaining 'unity in diversity'. It was he who was called upon to perform the role of mediator and conciliator, acting as a broker between the occupational groups and grades, and carefully avoiding too close an identification with any one of them. While this role increased the centrality of the branch secretary, however, it also revealed the rather precarious nature of his power, since it was

conditional on his being able to maintain the skilful balancing act between different groups.

Thirdly, the branch secretary played a key role in action which was largely dependent upon his political skills and contacts. The branch secretary and the other branch officials maintained a close working relationship with their branch committee. The branch committee rarely provided a challenge to the power of the branch secretary. This was partly because committee members seldom had strong local bases. The branch's centralised power structure, and the relatively small size of the average representatives' constituency inhibited their development. More important, the branch committee was broadly supportive of the leadership and strategy of the branch secretary. This was due in large measure to the relative success of the strategy over a long period, and consequent membership support for, or acquiescence in, the leadership's policies.

Major opposition to the leadership tended to be excluded from the formal structures of the branch. Grade dissatisfactions were manifested in 'breakaway movements', rather than divisions between the branch committee and the secretary. A challenge to the leadership's position from a communist party faction was systematically blunted over the years. Various organisation devices were traditionally employed to restrict the influence of this opposition. For example, the tactics used by the so-called 'bloc' ensured that this communist party element was isolated within the branch. A system of concerted withdrawals by 'bloc' candidates

enabled it to concentrate the votes of its supporters and to dominate the branch committee and officials, despite occasional attempts by dissident groups to discredit their activities. (On 'breakaway movements' and the 'bloc' nationally, see Bealey 1977:296-329, 385-89; 1976:404-405).

The bloc seemed to be a somewhat amorphous organisation. Those associated with it denied that it constituted an organised grouping within the branch, but its opponents claimed that it was a 'well-oiled election machine', designed to maintain a dominance of the branch executive and other elected bodies and posts. Whatever its precise significance, the fact remained that from the late 1960s until the mid-1980s, the opposition to the 'bloc' failed to achieve significant strength on the branch executive and rarely had a consistent and serious impact on policy.

Despite the centrality of the branch secretary, he was not, either alone or in combination with the branch executive, in a position of total dominance, unfettered by any countervailing forces. The branch membership's constitutional position meant that it could and did exert a restraining influence on the leadership. Naturally, branch leaders had the usual scope for organising and directing the proceedings of branch meetings. Policy seldom emanated directly from the members, since policy, especially collective bargaining strategy, in reality emerged most commonly in the form of recommendations laid down in the branch executive's report. Moreover, membership decisions did not necessarily bind the leadership's hands too tightly in practice.

However, the branch executive was certainly not immune from defeat at branch meetings. In 1984, for example, the executive's position on staffing was defeated twice. Problems over ten HEO members wanting to be released to secure LCS jobs but being refused by branch officials were raised and challenged successfully by branch members. On another occasion the branch secretary had agreed with the Post Office Tower branch secretary that surplus staff in the latter branch could be transferred to the former. The membership reminded the executive that such moves could be accomplished through the transfer system but that proposed transfers should be cleared with the receiving branch membership. In early 1985, it was clear that the branch leadership, anticipating rejection of certain proposals, modified them substantially in advance of presenting them to a special branch meeting. This was the case when the National Executive Council (NEC) asked branches for recommendations on whether the union should introduce paid officials at regional, district, or both levels.

Union strategy

The pattern of industrial relations, already by the late 1970s, under strain as a result of the pressures of public sector 'commercialisation' and of pay policies of successive governments (Batstone et al 1984), was to come in the early 1980s, into conflict with the demands of a new model of management action. Management argued that while the bases of the old consensus might have been adequate in the 1960s and 1970s, industrial relations now called for flexibility and responsiveness to changing conditions. Management

was thus faced with the task of developing new industrial relations structures and practices capable of sustaining this new approach, and of building a new consensus capable of gaining the commitment and consent of the unions and through them of the workforce. The task was by no means easy, for the new approach was itself eroding the consensual elements of industrial relations. In particular, the increased pace of modernisation meant change and insecurity, especially since the growth of the basic telephone service was likely to slow down considerably in the course of the 1980s as the market became 'saturated'.

Modernisation could well generate fear of the future and insecurity among workers who might face retraining and redeployment and the acquisition of new skills, if not redundancy. Ignorance of the precise effects of the modernisation plans and of their impact in different parts of the organisation removed the predictability that was a major basis of mutual trust built up between management and unions. The challange to the monopoly, which subsequently led to a weakening of the statutory position of the telecommunications business, was further fostering a climate of insecurity about the future.

Unsurprisingly, implementation of the new strategy was not a smooth process. It weakened the material underpinnings of workers' commitment to the employing organisation. Traditional skills were being called into question, job prospects became more uncertain, joint control over large areas of work organisation was being subjected to managerial scrutiny as management moved to reassert

its prerogatives. Yet as the political expectation changed and the pressures on telecommunications increased, it was more important than ever for the workforce to be committed to modernisation and change. As a result, the full rigours of the new strategy were mitigated in practice by the more pragmatic approach of 'traditional' managers, even if some of the principles of the new industrial relations were tarnished in the process.

The impact of the creation of NNS as a separate profit centre within BT was not felt at branch level until early 1984. The new managing director of the NNS division was a BT board member. Under the managing director were twelve district managers responsible for local staff and technical functions. Whereas the unions previously dealt with the area general manager, from 1984 they were dealing with the London district manager for NNS who was brought in from elsewhere within BT.

Under the district manager, the head of division with whom branch officials dealt most frequently remained the same. He appeared to have been exposed to privatisation but not to have changed his style as a result, therefore, the old civil service 'custom and practice' ethos still prevailed. He often tried new ideas out on branch officials and at the time of the research they were able to influence his thinking. It was recognised by branch officials that this could change after the modernisation programme is complete.

Although NNS was a profit centre within BT, its accounts were not made available to the unions. Clearly, however, the profitability

of NBS depended on the transfer prices fixed for the scale of network services to local districts. The unions judged this by the overall profitability of BT. In return NBS leased the buildings from the local area whose accounts were seen, in commercial confidence, by union branch officials.

There had always been regular monthly meetings, chaired by the head of division with a second-line manager and branch officials. There was a fixed agenda and minutes were taken. These meetings had continued since reorganisation. In addition, the district manager met the area co-ordinating committee on a quarterly basis. The strains caused by commercialisation and modernisation provoked a number of changes in the union which loosened the centralisation of power, weakened the bases of occupational settlement, and called into question features of the national leadership's strategy of support for modernisation and change (see Batstone et al 1984).

In the branch studied the process of constructing and reconstructing the response to change was complex and unpredictable. The interests of different groups and factions within the branch, the way change impinged upon them, and the way in which they mobilised the organisational resources of the branch all affected the local union's response to change. This meant that while the branch's organisation and strategy were importantly conditioned by the nature of the employing organisation(s) (the Post Office and British Telecom), they were not totally determined by them. Thus although the centralisation of control in the branch reflected the centralised nature of collective bargaining in the Post Office and British

Telecom, it also responded to factors independent of employer structure, and in particular the strategy of the leadership for coping with inter-grade conflict.

When the structure and organisation of the employer changed, there was no simple, automatic process of adaptation on the part of the branch. For example, managerial devolution in telecommunications did not lead to a simple process of devolution in the POEU but, initially at least, it reinforced the centralising tendencies of the local leadership in some respects. Even though there were pressures for 'adaptation' to a new management structure, there were equally counterpressures. For example, the branch structure persisted in the face of change because the branch executive had a vested interest in maintaining it and acted to ensure its survival. Moreover, a response to change generated contradictions within the union's organisation and strategy: there was no guarantee that these moves towards re-establishing a 'functional fit' with the new management structure and strategy would actually achieve such a result.

The branch leadership's strategy forced it to facilitate change (which it believed necessary to safeguard the long-term interests of its members), but the very nature of that change could endanger the basis of the members' commitment to the leadership and provide the reason for a challenge to leadership policies. As a result, the act of mediation between employer and membership that the leadership was required to perform was imperilled; change was undermining its

ability to 'deliver' the members, and so jeopardising further change on which its strategy depended.

At the same time, the increasingly harsh and threatening political climate of the early and mid-1980s made it questionable how far management would be willing or able to grant the material concessions to the union that would smooth acceptance of change. This would in turn make it more difficult to re-establish a new stable consensual relationship with management in telecommunications. It may force the leadership to maintain unity by making concessions to oppositional currents in the union. This in turn could weaken the pragmatism of the leadership's strategy and hence make it more difficult to re-establish the over-arching industrial relations consensus.

As a result, the leadership attempted to divert, absorb or defeat criticisms and so reassert its control. Thus the response of the branch to change, far from being an automatic 'functional' adaptation, was a negotiated political process in which the internal forces within the union vied for influence and control. The outcome was an unfinished, provisional process of readjustment. The difficulties of reconstructing the response to change made the maintenance, in the long-term, of consensus with management more of a problem. The branch could therefore act as a significant constraint upon the implementation by management of its new strategy; the very process of modernisation and change that gave rise to the new management structure and policies were at the same

time creating obstacles to it by increasing the insecurity and dissatisfaction of branch members.

Motor Parts

The plant where this study was carried out was the parts and accessories division of a major British car manufacturer. Cars and other vehicles were manufactured at other plants, and the separate parts facility had only been established in the mid-1970s. This move heralded the start of a strategy of improving customer service in order to compete more effectively. Senior managers saw the parts replacement plant's function primarily in terms of providing a rapid response to customers' needs.

For the motor parts and accessories industry, the beginning of the 1980s, according to the division's managing director, 'exploded the myth that the after-market is recession proof' (Motor Parts Company 1983). The theory behind the 'myth' is that, in a recession cars will be retained longer, which should boost demand for replacement parts. Accessory sales should rise as owners compensate for having to keep a vehicle for longer than intended. This should in turn compensate both for lower volumes in the original equipment business in a weak new car market and for original equipment business lost to UK companies through higher import of new cars.

It had not worked out that way because the nature of some components had inbuilt advantages for the consumers. The tyre industry is the obvious example: radial tyres doubled mileage

capability and consequently caused extensive damage to the tyre-makers' replacement markets. Assessing the precise size of the after-market is extremely difficult. In the 1982 Monopolies and Mergers Commission report advocating the end of exclusive franchising of replacement parts by manufacturers, the commission put the size of the total UK market, including accessories, at £2 bn.; estimated imports at £1.2 bn. to £1.5 bn.; and exports at £2.2 bn. to £2.5 bn.. It reckoned that there were 300 main parts makers and concluded that a further 1,700 smaller companies were also involved.

In these conditions the division had been unable to retain a firm grip on export sales, which accounted for just under £100 m., of its total sales of £350 m. in 1982 (down £50 m. on the previous year). At the end of 1980 the division announced the launch of franchised wholesaling and retailing operations for Belgium, the Netherlands, Finland and Denmark, with plans to follow up in West Germany. But it found the going very hard and the exercise changed from expansion to retention.

Management expected no fundamental improvement in the economic situation and the market, so that competitiveness had to be ensured through cost reduction measures. The structure of the production, which was basically job or job lot production according to customer specifications, did not allow for mass production of stock to cope with economic fluctuations. Management, therefore, tried to ensure a high degree of utilisation by short-time work and, in the long run, a significant staff reduction.

At the beginning of 1982, the division cut 1,000 jobs, a third of its then workforce of 3,000. The biggest single casualty in these cutbacks was at the plant studied; 280 volunteers from its 1,500 non-manual workers were made redundant. Such a reduction was made possible, on the one hand by technological changes which had been accelerated in recent years, and on the other hand by a rigid horizontal and vertical reorganisation of the division which started in 1982. This organisational reform was aimed at an improved and shortened process of managerial decision-making in order to achieve higher flexibility in adapting to market fluctuations.

Alongside these changes there were attempts to increase productivity by investing in rationalisation measures. Investments at the division increased in real terms in 1981 by ten per cent on the previous year and in 1982 by a further 6.5 per cent, mainly in computer-controlled equipment. Whilst the number of workers had fallen since 1980, productivity per worker had risen since 1979 and increased by just under thirteen per cent in 1982.

The division of labour

The non-manual workers on which the study concentrated consisted of three occupational groups, clerks, administrators and technicians, who worked within six departments; accounting and finance, marketing, data-processing and organisation, research and product development, personnel, and maintenance. Despite the cutbacks referred to above, there were no redundancies in the maintenance department because the economic recession could not be compensated

by short-term personnel fluctuations, and because a basic staff of qualified workers had to be retained. In fact, there was a shortage of qualified technicians in this department. In the past, the division had solved this problem by employing temporary workers, but in view of the employment situation in the division, the number of such workers was reduced after pressure from the union, and they were subsequently replaced by regular technicians.

Among the non-manual workers, some sixty per cent were employed in the clerical sector, twenty-five per cent in administration, and the remainder were technicians. Some 800 of the total non-manual workforce were women. The division offered a wide range of training programmes. These were increased in 1982 and were attended by about 250 workers annually. The training scheme concentrated on new technologies: micro-processors, programming and office technology. Alongside these activities, there were attempts to step up the use of a Computer Aided Design System (CAD) at the plant in order to increase efficiency in production and overall productivity. The data-processing and organisation department had its own central unit and also the staff capacities to develop and apply CAD technology in close co-operation with the hardware and software firms involved.

Besides CAD technology, order processing was computer-based to ensure a more efficient handling of orders as well as better possibilities to control the actual stage of the filing of orders. All departments used computers, but the extent of computer use varied considerably. Most of the clerical functions in the

accounting and finance, and marketing departments had been computerised. In the other departments the situation was rather different. Although most routine and 'batch' systems functions were linked to computerised systems, these departments carried out a multitude of different tasks which were not mechanised.

The clerks in accounting and finance, and marketing departments performed one primary function which involved a high level of interdependence with other functions and departments. Their primary task was preparing data (such as invoices and orders) into a form acceptable to the computer, and the prepared data was then sent for punching and processing. Because the completed work was either returned to the originating department, or passed on to another department, this involved a certain degree of co-operation both with each other, and with other departments.

The work itself was routine but needed care. Such care involved not merely a sense of responsibility on the part of the clerks, but also a good deal of consultation with administrators and with members of other departments. There was also a high degree of supervision. In both departments only about half were routine clerks, paid at a relatively low level. Therefore, superordinates provided the central focus of contact. They did this in terms not merely of work-related problems, but also of sociability within the department. Hence in any one day, much of the social contacts of departmental members were with their superiors. Much of this contact concerned problems and queries relating to work.

While administrators were formally responsible for time-keeping and for the work, the more important pressures on the clerks in these two departments came from three other sources. The first of these was colleagues, for much of the work involved one person checking particular elements on orders or invoices, and then passing the data on to another person who in turn ran other checks. To this extent, delay on the part of one person could interfere with the work of another. The second pressure came from other departments. The departments received invoices and orders from other departments and in turn sent them on to others, particularly accounts. This pressure was monthly. In order for accounting and finance and marketing to produce monthly financial figures, these departments had to have their figures completed a few days before the end of the month.

The primary pressure was, however, an internalised one. To a large degree, the clerical staff set their own pace within these broader constraints. In this sense, they accepted a high level of responsibility, consistent with the individualistic ideas of career advancement and merit increases. This individualism was fostered by the institutional system, merit payments, the career system, and the way in which upgradings were given. The union, within these departments, had no powers, formal or informal, in relation to work. It had no say in the amount or distribution of overtime, or in staffing levels, nor did it control the exchange of jobs.

As indicated above, a substantial proportion of the clerical staff in the remaining departments were not primarily engaged on computer-

related tasks, although the majority were at least peripherally involved. As opposed to 'batch' systems, 'on-line' interactive systems had been developed, where the clerks' functions included both direct data input and also access to the file for information retrieval, updating and so on. Control over the data, therefore, was no longer 'lost' as far as these clerks were concerned.

The level of functional specialisation was high, both between and within these other departments. That is, not only were different aspects of the motor parts industry carried out by these different departments; data-processing and organisation, research and product development, personnel, and maintenance, but work within the departments was functionally organised by sections. In reality, therefore, clerks in these departments hardly ever carried out a 'combination' of tasks; the extent of functional specialisation within the department meant that each of the necessary clerical tasks would be carried out by a separate individual. Task fragmentation meant that many clerks had little conception of the nature of the motor parts business, or how their work related to the organisation (or even department) as a whole.

To turn now to consider the administrators. Their jobs consisted of three main elements. Firstly, they checked the long-term work of the area of the department for which they were responsible, for example, comparing actual and target performance, and working out the implications of this for keeping to longer-term targets. Secondly, they were responsible, on a daily basis, for planning the output for their area of work. Thirdly, since they were

responsible for planning the output in their own areas, they had to liaise with other departments concerning, for example, matters such as the need for overtime.

The result of this job content was that they had a very wide range of discretion. They had a good deal more freedom than the clerks just described. They had to be highly mobile in their job. They needed to go to their own office, to the stores, as well as to a number of staff areas. They could legitimately be in virtually any area of the plant. What this meant was not only did administrators spend a lot of time in the offices, but they also tended to spend time and build up relationships with the shop-floor workers.

The offices of administrators tended to be close to the shop-floor. In addition there was no supervision actually exercised over them in their offices. They continually moved in and out of their offices, and it would have been impossible to check whether such absence was legitimate or not. There was, therefore, considerable opportunity for social contact between them, both in their offices and on the shop-floor. The constraints upon this were far fewer than among clerical staff. Quite frequently, groups of them could sit around and talk, particularly during periods such as shop-floor lay-offs. Pressure was not on them in such a steady way as it was for most clerks. It had peaks and troughs. Similarly, they occasionally exchanged jobs; for example, helping a new person, or agreeing to check another's work. Further, their jobs involved contact with other similar groups.

Management as a whole accounted for some of their contacts. But the identity of those managers, and the nature of their relationship with them were significantly different from those with whom other clerical staff had contact. In this sense, they had extremely high discretion. Whereas the clerks were generally seeking advice from their superiors, these workers were giving advice to members of management. The high range of discretion meant that, in the main, these administrators said they enjoyed their jobs. It also meant that they were far less dependent upon management in the performance of their tasks. They had mobility around the plant, and a wide range of contacts, a clear awareness of their own identity; and private space in the form of their offices, which permitted a great deal of discussion and sociability.

In two departments, research and product development, and maintenance, there were technicians who had served a period of apprenticeship and without this they would not have gained access to these jobs. Such control was primarily imposed by the union rather than by management. In this sense, the union was the more powerful. In the main, work in the research and product development department involved tasks confined to servicing the organisation's processes of production. Although these technicians were not involved in direct production they carried in the performance of their jobs a degree of responsibility. In only a few cases were technicians actually carrying out a job without being responsible to another person. They worked in small groups, and although often required to exercise technical judgement, this was done on the basis of understanding the general principles, reasons

and purposes of their work, rather than on that of skills developed from experience.

Maintenance technicians performed a number of tasks. Some were involved in routine analysis and routine testing, using laid-down sample schedules following known and proved techniques. At times this group were also involved in research and development, either in supporting technicians in this department or in tasks requiring a small degree of responsibility. Others performed an inspection function in that they tested out new materials and checked plant before use. But one of the major functions of all the maintenance technicians was to find faults on shop-floor and office equipment.

The functions of these technicians, both in research and product development and maintenance, were informed by a 'craft consciousness' (Perrow 1972:75-88; Touraine 1974). The exercise of their skills, and the knowledge and thought which this involved, meant they could resist pressure for either production or other managerial reasons. Supervision was not close, while constraints upon managerial behaviour were also imposed. This was not only found in the use of overtime rotas, but also in detailed rules concerning demarcation and mobility. These took two forms. Firstly, the union prevented mobility between jobs on any day-to-day basis. A technician worked on, for example, routine testing, and the overtime rotas did not operate for maintenance technicians as a whole but on the basis of these various separate jobs. The second area of demarcation related to the other technical groups, such as, for example, those performing an inspection function. It was usual

for it to be open to doubt as to who should undertake particular tasks. In the main such questions and problems were amicably resolved between the workers themselves with the aid of an informal monthly rota.

Most tasks were individual, although, particularly in research and production development, a piece of work was likely to pass from one part of the department to another. Social contact through the task itself tended, therefore, to be very limited. But social contact between the technicians was relatively high for one main reason. The pressure of work was not great, and hence workers were able to move around the department, or even the plant in the case of those on maintenance, to chat.

The 'craft' ethic also fostered an identity with similar workers and a rejection of dependence upon management. This was to be seen most clearly in the existence for many years of a collective agreement concerning maintenance technicians. It was valued because it prevented these technicians' dependence upon any one manager; the agreement enabled the technicians to move from one division to another within the company with no loss of pay or job security.

From this description of the work experience of these three occupational groups a number of broad conclusions can be drawn. Among the clerical staff work experience was almost totally determined by management who also formed the focus of social contacts of both a work and 'social' nature. Clerks tended to

operate under a strict system of managerial supervision, so that their freedom of movement was limited. The administrators had much greater freedom. Their work required mobility, involved them with both staff and shop-floor workers, and provided many opportunities for sociability among themselves. Greater peer contact could be seen as encouraging collective orientations, while the nature of their contact with management tended to be different from those of clerical staff. Not only was such contact relatively less frequent, but also administrative staff tended to advise management, rather than be dependent upon advice from it. Their discretion was therefore greater. While the pattern of contacts among these workers was generally such as to foster collective orientation, the union played less of a central role than it did among the technicians. For working as a technician required an apprenticeship. It is through such means that craft workers have traditionally maintained control; but such control for the technicians owed rather more to the wider union than to the workplace organisation itself. In addition, the relative freedom which was one of the distinguishing characteristics of the technicians' work, along with the lack of pressure as compared with production areas, meant that the union played an important role in establishing the basic conditions under which the technicians worked rather than in the detail of day-to-day work experience.

Union organisation

The administrative, clerical and technical workers were all represented by APEX, which also represented practically all non-

manual trade unionists in the parent company. APEX had had some members in the company for many years but until the early 1970s most non-manual workers were non-unionists. They began joining from the late 1960s, and following negotiations with the company APEX was granted full recognition early in the 1970s. A lengthy procedural agreement was drawn up between the company and the union setting up a joint negotiating committee (JNC) outlining wages and general working conditions.

Under the agreement all non-manual workers in the company wishing to be represented by a union had to belong to APEX, which by the beginning of 1982 had just over 1,000 members on the main site. Absolute membership levels on the site had ranged between about 1,000 and 1,500, but the density of members had always remained about the same as at the time of the study.

All the non-manual workers on the site belonged to the same APEX branch. Branch meetings, however, were poorly attended, often failing to obtain the quorum necessary for them to be held, and the branch itself seemed to have little or no active role in industrial relations. The branch committee's role seemed principally to be collating demands from different sections of the membership which went to make up the annual wage claim.

The most important institutions for industrial relations were the JNC and the workplace representatives. The JNC formally consisted of union and management representatives, but the union side also met separately prior to the actual negotiation meetings. The union

side consisted of APEX national and area officials, the APEX senior staff representative and officials and senior shop stewards from the manual unions. The JNC initially concerned itself with a range of issues affecting not only all the workers covered by it, but also some of the non-union sections.

Sources of power

The APEX senior staff representative was chosen from among the staff representatives in the mid-1970s, and effectively acted as a full-time official. He was based on the main site and was active on the branch committee, but his main role seemed to be dealing with company-level industrial relations management. The senior staff representative was elected every year, but once elected had never been challenged.

On the main site there were eighteen staff representatives; one for each of the areas within the company. Election for ordinary representatives also took place every year, but as with the senior representative, once elected they were rarely challenged: a pattern which was reported to have been consistent since the union was recognised. The main reason apparently being that some of the constituencies were very small and were unable to find people willing to stand. Although there were no unfilled positions, changes usually only occurred when someone resigned.

The distinguishing feature of workplace organisation on the main site was its centralised character. The APEX senior representative

only brought the representatives together to consult them about the annual meetings of the JNC. The eighteen representatives on the site never met informally and only met either if they were called together by the employee relations manager, or at branch committee meetings. (The senior representative was an ex-officio member of the branch committee). In effect union organisation on the site consisted of the branch committee, which only came together to discuss wage claims or other interests concerning the whole non-manual workforce.

All the representatives belonged to the branch committee which met once a month. These meetings had no fixed agenda, and were usually fairly informal occasions used to exchange information and discuss recent events in the company. The senior representative used these meetings to inform representatives about issues he had taken up, and the outcome of any negotiations. The meetings were also used to review issues the senior representative intended to raise with management in order to identify any pitfalls. Once a year the committee initiated the process of consulting members about the forthcoming wage claim, and other issues they would like to be put to the JNC. In recent years additional issues had included a demand for a local facilities agreement, and for the negotiation of a new technology agreement.

Union strategy

The main issues ordinary representatives reported as arising were disciplinary questions, and queries from workers about their job

descriptions. On disciplinary issues the senior representative and the individual member met managers and, according to the nature of the case, tried to mitigate the effects of any disciplinary measures the management wanted to impose. Job description issues arose when workers queried tasks they were given to do and these were usually resolved by the representative referring to the written job descriptions that every worker had signed.

The senior representative and sometimes the local full-time official were also involved in departmental level negotiations, usually over the implementation of company-wide changes. The working week had been reduced in recent years, from forty to thirty-nine hours, and then to thirty-eight hours for all non-manual workers. However, since the motor parts industry includes shift working such changes could not be simply introduced. When the first reduction was made, compensation in the form of extra holidays and overtime payment was sought by computer staff, which was extended when the second reduction was introduced. These details were negotiated entirely by the senior representative with local managers. The senior representative had also sought, with some success, to modify the application of general rules governing payment for relief work.

The main procedural agreement provided for consultation by the company over significant changes in working practices. There was an elaborate hierarchy of consultative committees in the company, starting with departmental committees and ending up with one covering the whole company. However, these committees did not deal with changes in working practices, although announcements about

major changes had been made through the job evaluation consultative committee. Instead it was left to local representatives and managers to determine the form in which consultation over changes in working practices took place. It seemed that much of this took place informally, and representatives repeatedly mentioned the ease with which they could talk to managers. In addition, managers were sometimes invited to attend the branch committee meetings where representatives asked for information about production trends and plans.

Occasions such as these were used by representatives less with a view to gaining any influence over innovation plans than to be forewarned of possible effects on job security. Representatives were very conscious of the fact that production of a particular accessory could end whenever a contract had been fulfilled, or there was a downturn in the market. The end of orders meant that redeployment of workers who handled and filed orders would have to take place, unless new products and orders were brought in, and it was with this aspect of product and process changes that they were most concerned. Representatives and members sometimes expressed concern about the deskilling of their work, which they felt accompanies automation, but just viewed this as inevitable. The idea that there should be a new technology agreement did not seem to have alerted this perspective of inevitability for it was simply seen as a means of formalising and strengthening their ability to obtain advance warning of changes affecting job security.

Given this perspective, it is hardly surprising to find that the representatives seemed relatively unconcerned about changes that had taken place in their departments since the installation of computers. The management's decision to upgrade the assistant computer programmers had not been questioned, and the senior representative had only been concerned to ensure that they all remained as members of the union. Similarly, the representatives made no comments about the most recent changes whereby many computer operators' jobs were lost with the amalgamation of two departments. Their own members, including the assistant computer programmers, would lose no pay by the changes because of existing agreements concerning such changes, but beyond that, the non-manual representatives and members seemed to feel there was no alternative to the new system.

The move towards a computer-based plant was achieved as a result of the convergence of two strands of development within the company. On the one hand, the market competitiveness had to be ensured through cost reduction measures and new production facilities. On the other hand, production and technical managers had already been experimenting with forms of computer process control; the results of which had clinched arguments about future development in terms of a strategy of reducing the executive control of non-manual staff over order and production processes. The need to install new technical facilities simply provided these managers with the opportunity of implementing their ideas.

Compared with the previous working practices the new computer-based plant certainly did 'deskill' the order processing and filing clerks' work by removing all but the most routinely simple non-manual tasks. However, computerisation also created tasks among administrators and assistant programmers. These workers' conceptual skills were enhanced insofar as they had to be familiar with all the production and operation processes under their control, instead of only discrete parts of the plant. In addition, they were required to undertake elements of production planning, and issue routine job allocation instructions to the clerical workers.

The plant development, and the forms of work organisation introduced, all seem to have been determined by the production and technical managers with little or no contribution from the workforce or the union. The fact that the union had been established for only a few years when the first phase of organisational and technological changes took place partly explains its lack of intervention then. The lack of information released by management also reduced workers' ability to contribute to subsequent changes. However, more important than the lack of information, or the continuing organisational weakness of the union, was the absence of any concern with production or work organisation details on the part of both workers and union representatives.

The senior staff representative and staff representatives, and members were concerned to receive early information about product or process changes; but only to assess the likely effects on job security. While there appeared to be some feeling that the new

forms of work organisation were undesirable in many respects, the prevailing attitude was that such questions were beyond the workers' competence or legitimate concern. With such a perspective, the provision of more detailed information about planned changes would have made no difference.

Local Government

The local authority case study concerned a county council which came into being in 1974 as part of the reorganisation of the local government system in England and Wales. The new authority covered some 645,000 acres and was formed from the existing county, city (which as the county borough had provided all local government services within its area), and a large part of a bordering county. In 1972 the Local Government Act made the new non-metropolitan county councils responsible for education, personal social services, highways and refuse disposal, strategic planning, fire service, libraries, and consumer protection. The new council provided these services to a population of approximately 550,000 (Local Authority 1982).

In its plan for reorganisation the government considered that services such as housing, public health and refuse collection would be more effectively administered over a smaller area. In the authority studied these services were the responsibility of five district councils. The authority, like other public service organisations, was labour intensive; wages and employed services amounted to about sixty-five per cent of expenditure. In 1983 the

council was employing just over 19,000 people to meet its service responsibilities, about fifty per cent full-time (Local Authority 1983).

The management of industrial relations was part of the general function of those elected members and officers who were responsible for personnel management in the council. At elected member level the personnel sub-committee of the policy and resources committee had this responsibility. Under the council's standing orders the sub-committee was charged to 'determine, keep under review and from time to time, as may be appropriate, amend' the staffing establishment and employee terms and conditions of service. It was also responsible for reviewing the efficiency of staffing utilisation, approving employee training and education programmes, and resolving such issues as pension rights, extensions of service, early retirements, dismissals, suspensions and financial compensation claims. All these matters clearly have industrial relations implications and members of the sub-committee played a prominent role in the formal and informal joint regulation machinery.

One of the recent developments in local authority management had been the change in status and influence of personnel officers. This situation can be related to three factors: the 1972 Bains Report's attention to personnel management, a growth in employment legislation in the mid-1970s, and public expenditure reductions (Bains 1972; see also Fowler 1975; Walsh 1981). The Bains Report, in pointing out that the major scope for improved efficiency in

highly labour intensive organisations was by more effective use of human resources, considered that local government lagged behind industries and other public service employers in personnel management. Drawing attention to the limited role of the central personnel officer it argued for an extension of responsibilities and status. Bains recommended that in the new authorities these officers should have direct access to the chief executives and on matters within their specialised knowledge line management should accept and act upon the personnel officer's advice as they would that of the treasurer on financial matters.

Meeting the requirements of legislation such as the Trade Union and Labour Relations Act 1974, the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, and the Employment Protection Act 1975 caused local authorities to place greater reliance on the advice and expertise of personnel officers. The final boost to this officer's role in authorities came when successive governments from 1975 onwards demanded reductions in local government expenditure and staffing levels. In authorities this might have created tensions between central and line management but extended the staffing control functions of personnel officers.

In the authority studied the council went further than Bains recommended and made their personnel officer a permanent member of the chief officer's management team with deputy chief officer status. The role as management's chief adviser on employment matters had grown because of the employment legislation and the authority's

efforts to exercise greater staffing control. This had been underlined by being given deputy chief officer status.

The responsibilities of the personnel officer were those usually associated with the personnel management function and included staffing utilisation, control and planning, recruitment and selection, staff development and training, working conditions and employee services, and industrial relations. However, the traditional structure of local government management which also gave each chief officer these responsibilities meant that the nature of the personnel officer's role was partly executive and partly advisory. In practice this division of responsibility was co-ordinated through a network of communicating and reporting relationships which linked council committees, central and line management.

In the area of industrial relations the personnel officer acted as adviser to the personnel committee, chief officer's group and line management, as well as co-ordinating the application of national, provincial and local agreements and procedures. The personnel officer was the primary channel of communication between management and two of the council's three major occupational groups, NALGO representing non-manual and NUPE manual workers; and serviced the joint machinery for these two groups. Industrial relations with the third group, the teaching unions, was the responsibility of the chief education officer. The personnel officer also undertook much of the informal negotiation and consultation with the NALGO and NUPE representatives.

At the time of the study the personnel officer had been in the post since 1974, and prior to this appointment was establishment officer of the previous county council. Establishment officer was the name given to personnel officers in local government before reorganisation and it served to emphasise the limited role of these officers. There were five assistant personnel officers who were delegated duties across the span of personnel management responsibilities. There was also a twelve-strong team of management service officers whose duties were concerned with improving organisation efficiency and the maintenance of manual productivity schemes.

The sixty-nine elected members of the council were responsible for its policies and oversight of its activities. The functions were exercised through a network of committees, but central to the committee structure was the policy and resources committee which acted as the 'management board' of the authority. This committee planned overall long-term policy and advised the council on its objectives and priorities. It had control of finance, staffing, and lands and buildings; and ensured 'that the council [did] not launch into new commitments which [were] either too costly or [were] out of step with general policy' (Local Authority 1981). Programme committees were responsible for formulating policy proposals and making decisions on operation matters for particular services.

At officer level the corporate management structure also reflected the influence of the Bains Report. The council's chief executive presided over a management team of departmental chief officers.

This team, known as the chief officers' group, was responsible for preparing, co-ordinating and monitoring plans and programmes in accord with the policies laid down by the council. In addition to this corporate function, chief officers were responsible for the direction of the activities of their departments. Of the thirteen departments, eight provided a direct service to the community and others supported the work of the service departments, the general management of the authority's activities, or both.

The division of labour

The authority's main non-manual occupational groups were clerical and administrative staff, although a relatively smaller number of social workers, librarians, technicians and drawing office staff were employed. The majority of non-manual workers were employed in departments such as education, social services, planning, and libraries. Chapter 2 referred to the argument that with increased bureaucratisation the nature of work has changed, as workplaces have become larger, more impersonalised and routinised. This proposition can be examined in relation to the local authority study.

In spite of the ubiquitous bureaucratisation in local government (see Littler 1982) the large clerical factory was exceptional although the number of such work situations was increasing. In this respect the increasing use of computer-based equipment was an important development. Yet many of the clerical and administrative

staff worked in buildings which were not purpose-built and which were in some cases unsuitable for office work.

In fact the environments in which the clerks and administrators worked varied greatly in style and quality. Offices had to be provided for a variety of different purposes accommodating units of staff which varied from two or three in the case of non-teaching staff in schools or several hundred at the authority's head office. Staff were given space in which to work according to their grade. Thus a chief officer was entitled to more space than, for example, an executive officer, or a clerical officer. It was common to find two senior officers sharing a room, or a senior officer sharing with three or even more subordinates. Standards varied widely. About half of the clerical and administrative staff worked in modern buildings. These were very suitable for office accommodation. Those working in these buildings generally worked in large 'open-plan' offices. Others were unfortunate enough to work in buildings hardly suitable for office accommodation, tucked away in little rooms, with tiny rickety stairs. These latter conditions more closely resembled 'Dickensian clerkdom' rather than 'technological clerical factories'.

However, in contrast to these squalid working situations, bureaucratisation and expansion had, for many, brought about some large-scale factory-like developments. These were most commonly found in departments which dealt with very large amounts of paper or documents which needed to be routinely processed. The majority of clerical and administrative workers in the study undoubtedly

worked within bureaucratic constraints with regard to the way they carried out their tasks. However, within this study there was only a relatively small number of clerks and administrators working in what could accurately be called clerical factory conditions.

The introduction of computers in the late 1970s and early 1980s led to an increase in the division of labour, although in its extreme form this process was only a recent development. Computers and related sophisticated information retrieval systems had slowed down the growth in non-manual employment, but it was in the actual tasks undertaken in the office where the most marked effects were to be found. The long-term effect was to create a new division of labour in the office itself where one lowly group of workers were employed in routine tasks and were operating the machine whose tasks were rationalised and sub-divided, while above them a new group of controllers with specialist knowledge was emerging.

In recent years, there had been automation of whole office processes. Much local government clerical work is inevitably of a routine nature and the processing of endless streams of documents and papers characterises much of the execution of such business. Much of the work, for the clerks in the study, was repetitive and required merely the manipulation of fairly simple data and the application of standard rules and for most workers involved, very little decision-making of a fundamental kind was required. It was in this type of work that the authority had introduced new technology. Thus, education, social services, strategic planning,

libraries, and some personnel functions were among those areas covered by computers.

Where this had occurred there had been a resultant change in the organisation of work for the clerical and administrative staff involved. Reallocation of the total task to other sites and other workers was the first result. This was followed by a reduced demand for middle quality clerical work, while demand for high level computer programmers and analysees, and for computer operators increased.

The local authority had, therefore, in recent years automated some of its work routine. Many of the predictions concerning the introduction of this type of automated process in relation to work experiences held true for this group of workers. The working tasks were routinised, in contrast to the relatively small numbers of 'career' staff who would henceforth be needed. However, the link which some authors claim between the existence of automated working environments and trade union activity occurred only in a few limited cases (for a review of the more general debate, see Crompton and Jones 1984). This is explored more fully below.

Union organisation

In July 1983 the local authority NALGO branch membership was just under 2,500. With about 4,000 workers eligible for membership this represents a density of about sixty per cent compared with the national figure of seventy per cent for local government in NALGO

(Eaton and Gill 1983). However, this potential branch membership included about 1,300 part-time workers, most of whom worked away from the authority's head offices in schools and other council establishments. The branch accordingly had faced traditional difficulties associated with recruitment, a scattered workforce. Membership density at the head offices, for example, was estimated by branch officials to be over eighty per cent.

The branch activities until 1981 were determined by an executive committee which considered and dealt with all matters affecting the interests of members of the branch. The constitution of the branch produced some variation in this committee's membership numbers from year to year but in the year prior to the study was twenty. This included thirteen branch officials and seven departmental representatives. These officials were elected at the branch AGM held in November, but in practice, there was little competition for these posts and the usual procedure was for the meeting to endorse a list of nominations presented by the retiring executive. Departmental representatives were elected in each department during the autumn of each year. The branch adopted departmental stewards in 1981 following a debate within NALGO which led to the setting up of a working party on communications and membership participation.

The question of stewards had been under discussion within NALGO for several years. In 1973 the annual conference approved a document which accepted that there were already officials at branch level carrying out the functions of stewards and the 1976 conference instructed the NEC to issue guidance and information to each branch

recommending that it adopt a shop steward system 'as quickly as possible' (NALGO 1976). The effect on the local organisation of introducing a steward system is illustrated below.

Sources of power

The inaugural departmental committees were set up in the branch studied during 1976. Membership of the committees was by nomination and, where necessary, ballot. The size of these committees reflected the size of the department and the various sections incorporated within each department. Each departmental committee made its own nominations to the executive committee and selected the staff side representative for the department. The improved communications emanating from the creation of the new system were immediate. The main change was the presence, within groups of workers, of representatives providing links with the branch officials and able to take action on minor grievances quickly.

NALGO headquarters published a guide for departmental representatives in which advice to both branches and prospective or newly elected representatives was provided. The guide noted that there was a contrast in style between those branches where the representatives' functions were recruitment, representation and communications between members and the branch executive; and those branches where the departmental representatives were 'accredited' and authorised to negotiate with management representatives in the department on departmental matters. It concluded that basically it

was up to each branch to decide who should be responsible for what degree of negotiating at what level (NALGO 1978a).

In the branch studied the movement to a steward style of negotiating was slow despite trade union involvement in discussions with management about cuts in services from 1975 onwards. However, talk of possible reductions also served to stimulate recruitment which, in turn, was helped by the improved service to members provided by the departmental committees.

The 1978-79 executive committee's report gives some indication of the level and type of activity achieved during a period of only two years, and this was probably assisted by the gradual, rather than rapid, process from departmental representation to a steward system. The management services departmental committee were successful in arguing that the market rates for the data processing staff (paid by the authority) fell far below that level paid by other organisations. The environmental health department committee were successful in securing increased gradings for environmental health officers and technical assistants as well as for administrative staff. The social services departmental committee achieved the application of the national settlement for field and residential social workers on a more satisfactory level than that achieved nationally. The report considered that there was obviously scope for other departmental committees to achieve improvements in the pay and conditions of members where they were prepared, with the assistance of members, to draw up and pursue claims. In all cases

the executive committee had approved the claim prepared by the departmental committee.

Paradoxically, the success of the departmental committees placed increasing pressure on the organisational structure which had evolved from 1965 and led to the introduction of the steward system. At the branch AGM in 1978 a motion was carried calling for a re-examination of the branch constitution.

The executive committee appointed a branch review panel and an examination was accordingly undertaken of all types of decisions and activities which were identified as follows: financial, grievances or problems, conditions of service, industrial action, welfare, health and safety, membership, education and training, social, publicity, matters of urgency, and *ad hocs* (for example, implementation of national policy on such matters as agency staff).

From this examination a series of 'activity levels' were identified which formed the basis for considering a suitable branch structure. These levels were as follows: major controversial matters, primarily industrial action; other major issues such as branch policy and allocation of financial resources; matters affecting more than one department, negotiations and discussions with management; and co-ordination of branch activities; detailed work and analysis including, administration, special activities and departmental issues, and local industrial issues.

A comparison was made of these activity levels in relation to the existing branch structure, 'and it became immediately apparent that the greatest inconsistency was at the third level where there were two separate bodies, the executive committee and the staff side (departmental representatives), fulfilling the various functions' (NALGO 1979). Analysis of the work performed by the two bodies indicated that by far the greater amount of trade union activities was carried out by the representatives, whereas the executive committee tended to spend much of its time discussing non-policy matters. It was concluded that 'were it not for the dedication of a small band of people at the centre of the staff side, it is doubtful whether the effectiveness [of the branch] could be maintained'; and noted that 'the key positions within the organisation are largely held through individual initiatives' (NALGO 1979). (Batstone and his colleagues observed a similar situation in relation to clerical staff organisation in 1977).

The panel concluded that the interests of the branch would be best served by combining the two bodies for the purposes of internal discussion, consultation and action. In order to achieve the most efficient integration of the branch's available staffing resources, the panel proposed the adoption of departmental stewards and the creation of a stewards' committee. All stewards would be entitled to sit on the branch stewards' committee which would be serviced and attended by the branch secretary, treasurer and service conditions secretary. All other branch officials would be able to attend meetings of the steward committee but would have no right to vote. In addition, the branch would continue to elect seven staff

side representatives to act as negotiators but these would now be elected members of the stewards' committee.

The report on the structure of the branch was considered at the AGM in 1981 and was approved by a substantial majority (NALGO 1981a). Thus at the time of the study, the organisational changes, resulting in the 'steward system', were in the process of development. It is clear, however, that the most distinctive feature of the changes was that stewards were expected to negotiate within their own departments. The special and particular circumstances under which these organisational changes developed are outlined below.

The stewards' committee met monthly. At the first meeting of the newly elected committee, the members elected five delegates to annual conference, ten district council representatives and eight delegates to the local trades council. At the same meeting the committee appointed six sub-committees: finance and general purposes, education, publicity and membership, welfare, equal opportunities, and sports and social. These sub-committees were determined by the stewards' committee and they existed to 'relieve the stewards of involvement in routine matters of branch activities' (NALGO 1981b). They were, however, required to report regularly to the stewards' committee.

The stewards' committee was required to submit a report of its activities to the AGM. Branch rules also provided for the calling of special general meetings, either by the stewards' committee or a requisition in writing signed by at least forty members of the

branch. The quorum for these meetings was 100 members and between 1982 and 1984 special general meetings discussed such matters as the council's economy measures and national pay negotiations. There were no other regular branch meetings held during the year although usually one was convened in May to discuss the agenda for annual conference. Such meetings were frequently declared inquorate.

The monthly meetings of the stewards' committee dealt with a range of matters which related to local and national NALGO issues, and increasingly, wider trade union and political issues. Meetings were scheduled to begin at 4 pm and finish at 7 pm, however, many meetings failed to complete their agenda and the stewards had to meet a day or so afterwards to complete unfinished business. A typical agenda would include minutes of the previous meeting, urgent business, correspondence, reports from officials, reports and recommendations from sub-committees, district council representatives and trades council delegates, and motions on matters of current interest and importance.

A further responsibility of the stewards' committee at its first meeting was to elect the seven members who formed the employees' side of the local joint committee. The 'staff side' had responsibility for all matters of negotiation with management but were required to report their activities to the stewards' committee. These seven members elected a leader who not only functioned as the chief union spokesperson at joint committee meetings, but also undertook much of the informal bargaining with management.

Because of these responsibilities this leader was acknowledged by all the informants as the most influential figure in the branch.

The bulk of branch administration was undertaken by a branch administration officer. This branch, in common with many other larger NALGO branches, employed a full-time administrator, together with a part-time clerical assistant. The branch records and minutes of all meetings were maintained in the branch office and the administrator attended all formal meetings to take notes and to give administrative support to the union representatives attending.

The stewards' report to the AGM was the official means of keeping the membership informed of its activities. This was, however, a retrospective report and the individual departmental stewards had the main task of keeping the membership informed of branch policies and decisions. This communication channel was also used by some stewards to seek the membership views on current issues.

Union strategy

In the period since 1975 the overriding issue between management and all trade unions organised in the council had been staffing reductions. This situation had arisen because the council had been one of the authorities responding positively to central government demands for a reduction in the overall level of local government expenditure.

The effect can be measured by the council's claim that staffing was reduced by over eight per cent between 1975 and 1983 (Local Authority 1984). With its commitment to local joint regulation and the presence of well-developed trade union organisation, to achieve its economy measures management had of necessity to seek the co-operation of all unions. Although the trade unions stated their continued opposition to compulsory redundancy, management and unions agreed procedures for voluntary redundancy, early retirement and redeployment. At the time of writing there have been no compulsory redundancies and both NALGO and NUPE negotiators claimed this as their main achievement of collective bargaining in the last few years.

Although most departments had been affected, the main brunt of the authority's staffing economies had fallen on three departments: education, which was the biggest spending service, but the architects and surveyors and engineers departments experienced the most dramatic staffing reductions, thirty-four per cent and twenty-one per cent respectively. Branch negotiators had been particularly involved in protecting the jobs of non-teaching staff in education (clerks, secretaries and technicians) as well as those of architects and engineers.

While some local authorities experienced strikes by social workers in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the council was faced with a more limited form of action on both occasions. Through NALGO negotiators social workers asked for improved terms for dealing with cases referred to them outside normal working hours. Talks

failed but the issue was finally resolved when the social workers stopped their action (refusal to work overtime) to await the outcome of national settlements. These issues were unique in that they marked the only major disputes between the council and branch.

There had been limited forms of industrial action as part of national union action in annual pay rounds and several examples of action on purely local issues by individual employment groups. For example, in the department of planning and property services action had taken place in the form of refusing to cover vacant posts; and social workers had instructions to not cross other unions' picket lines in a health service dispute. However, none of this action could be considered to have reached major dispute proportions. Even with the authority going further than many others to achieve staffing economies, the union's opposition to council policies was expressed through the established formal and informal joint regulation machinery rather than by industrial action. To understand why this should be so in a period when both central government policies and those of the local authority had affected earnings, job security and career opportunities, it is necessary to examine the character of the local union; this is done in Part III.

Textiles

The company where this study was undertaken was a subsidiary of a large concern with interests in a number of sectors outside textiles. Turnover in 1983 was approximately £1 bn. and profits before tax were approximately £50 bn. (Textiles Company 1984). It

was a multi-national concern, but its main textile interests, however, were in the UK. In the 1960s and early 1970s it was one of the more profitable of four major concerns. This facilitated a diversification drive. Under the pressure of falling textile sales retrenchment took place in the early 1980s which resulted in a reduction in employment in the UK.

The textile, clothing and footwear industries are extremely vulnerable to swings in economic activity. Relatively small changes in consumer demand are amplified at each stage in the production chain by swings in stock holding. An unexpected surge in demand increases the share of the market taken by imports. Cuts in demand have a rapid effect upon capacity utilisation causing many companies with a viable future to fail. The effects of stop-go policies are very difficult to reverse after the event.

In the early 1980s the squeeze on bank credit and the high value of sterling, coupled with depressed domestic consumer demand and tight export margins were bound to cause redundancies, closures and the postponement of investment (NEDC 1982). In some sectors this had been compounded by artificially cheap imports from the USA. The most vulnerable companies were those which had committed themselves to new investments and an export drive, and small businesses.

By 1979 the first wave of redundancies and factory closures had already hit the industries and was causing considerable concern. A number of large companies such as ICI, Carrington Viyella and Monsanto were being forced towards retrenchment and a growing

number of small firms were threatened with bankruptcy. In 1979, Courtaulds alone declared its intention to make over 6,500 workers redundant and in wool textiles 4,500 jobs had been lost. Perhaps the most noticeable fact was that many of the closures were recently modernised plants in areas of high unemployment. In the early 1980s the situation had continued to decline. Between July 1979 and January 1980 alone, the textile sector suffered the sharpest job loss of any manufacturing sector: a total of 26,000 jobs, nearly six per cent of the workforce in textiles. Meanwhile 14,000 workers were made redundant in leather, footwear and clothing, 3.5 per cent. The major companies were all making savage cuts in the workforces. ICI Fibres were cutting back by over twenty-five per cent, Courtaulds, Carrington Viyella, and Tootal by at least ten per cent each. By 1982 over ten per cent of workers in the textile, clothing and footwear industries, that is, approximately 100,000 workers, had been made redundant (NEDO 1982).

The major product of the company investigated was blankets. (In this case study 'the company' refers to the subsidiary company). The reputation of the company was more based on blankets than on textile production. This study concentrated upon the company's largest blanket plant which was established at the beginning of the century. The smaller, more recently acquired establishment elsewhere played no role for the purposes of this research. In recent years the major investments at the main blanket plant were in new packaging and distribution equipment during the late 1970s.

Most of the characteristics of the industry outlined above applied to this company. Total employment in the company was reduced by 21.5 per cent between 1978 and 1983. Job loss was greatest amongst catering and non-production manual workers followed by distribution and offices. It was also clear that women were more likely to lose their job rather than men; thirty-two per cent compared with nineteen per cent.

The division of labour

Two general types of plant can be distinguished, each with different implications for work organisation. The difference between them lay in whether they were producing blankets in the old production area, or in the synthetic fibre production area. The latter type of plant was characterised by lower staffing levels and high flexibility.

The production of blankets was a machine operation performed mainly by men who were comparatively well-paid, with men also employed on ancillary jobs. The making up, finishing and packing stages were hand operations, carried out in the distribution department by women. Within both the production and distribution departments workers worked on their own and earnings were dependant upon individual effort. This influenced the nature of controls over work and the behaviour of workers. Work in the production department was directed towards the distribution department for packing and then transportation. But each department tended to

specialise in a small number of tasks and, generally, particular stages in the manufacture of a product.

Machinists, some one grade higher than the others depending upon the complexity of the task, worked one, two, or even three machines. The number depended, primarily, upon two factors. Firstly, it depended upon the technical demands of the machines and the amount of work involved in their running. For example, some machines had a longer cycle than others; the longer the cycle, the easier it was for a worker to run a number of machines. In the old production area most of the workers ran only one machine each, while in the synthetic fibre production area they ran two or three. The second important factor was the negotiation process whereby workers agreed to work a number of machines. The condition was, of course, that they received sufficient reward to make it attractive.

The distribution workers' work consisted of the intake of supplies and products from both inside and outside the plant, but mainly from the production areas and their supply to the stacking area for transportation. The focus of their work, as individuals, was ultimately the production areas. They relied upon, primarily, the programme of production. This programme was highly variable, and it therefore follows that the work of the distribution workers was subject to considerable variation. While the production workers were paid piecework, distribution workers were not only on lower job grades but also paid a daywork rate. Their effort, but not their pay, increased when production increased. The pressure of work,

therefore, meant that distribution workers had little control over the pace of their work.

The role of the manual union was most central in the production and distribution departments. In the machine shops, shop stewards played an important role in workers' experience. Not only was there a basic framework of rules in which the union had been involved, but also the union played a very clear role in terms of increasing earnings both through negotiation and the organisation of work itself. The latter aspect of exploiting the payment system meant that the union tended to expose workers to the nature of the technical system of production. Both these groups of workers also operated under a strict system of managerial supervision, so that there were few opportunities for sociability.

In production and distribution, as well as in the two other departments, marketing and personnel, management and administrative functions were carried out by departmental managers, supervisors and associated administrative and clerical staff. Departmental managers were responsible for the department's production or related areas, although with the variety of equipment within the two plants, two departmental managers were in control of the heterogeneous collection of machinery in production. Among departmental managers' tasks were ensuring that financial and production targets were met or exceeded, and industrial relations issues dealt with (under guidelines issued by the personnel manager). Supervision in the company was limited mainly to ensuring that safety procedures were followed, that machine

operators and so on attended to the jobs they had been allocated to (and did not spend too much time helping out with other workers' problems), and that output was progressing satisfactorily. This meant that, as has already been indicated, machine operators and distribution workers were in practice responsible for the specific quality and quantity of products. However, it was difficult for management to predict precisely the quality levels or output of a particular batch because of the effects of small variations in raw materials, and temperatures.

It was in order to overcome these problems that the synthetic fibre production area was built. Work in this new area was organised on similar lines to that in the older plant with a few important exceptions. In the older production area, on the whole, there was a rigid division of labour, with machine operators limited to performing relatively unskilled jobs. In the new area, on the one hand, there were also operators who performed the simplest operating and manual tasks, and on the other hand, there were some who now controlled the whole process. Their jobs required extensive working knowledge of all the processes carried out, together with the ability to plan work on a day-to-day basis, and effectively to supervise their own work tasks.

So far the description of the division of labour within the company has focussed upon the functional tasks of manual workers and managerial and supervisory staff. It is now necessary to consider the tasks of the associated administrative and clerical staff. A major constraint upon any rigid form of office organisation was

that the pattern of work was not totally predictable. Assuming that there was no backlog of work, then the tasks to be undertaken on any one day were determined by what came that morning in the mail and what telephone calls were made during the day. From experience, of course, there was a general idea of the pattern of work and peaks of work could be handled by developing a backlog.

However, the first task each morning for the lowest grade, the general clerks, was the sorting of the mail into different categories and allocating them between different members of the staff. One major division, but only in formal grade structures, not in practice, was between 'clerical' and 'administrative' work. Clerical work seemed, in the main, to be reserved for the most routine work; processing orders, bills and so on. On the other hand, those workers who drafted letters and serviced small committees were allocated to administrative grades.

But those on administrative grades exercised little control or discretion in respect of their own work. Particularly as far as work with the computerised system was concerned, it was found that administrators acted as 'leading operators'; that is relatively skilled clerks. Major personnel functions, hiring, firing, discipline and the organisation of work itself, were carried out by the personnel department. In short, the majority of those workers on the administrative grades could by no stretch of the imagination be said to exercise 'managerial' functions. Both the fragmentation of work tasks through competition and the systematisation of non-manual hierarchies as a consequence of job evaluation had, over the

previous five years, had the effect of restricting the 'clerical' title to the most routine tasks. As a consequence, it was becoming increasingly difficult to achieve internal promotion out of clerical work.

Through a series of stages during the late 1970s and early 1980s, the company changed from non-repetitive office work, to computerised processing of orders. Four features distinguish the computerised system from the earlier methods. Firstly, clerks fed data directly into the computer through visual display units (VDUs) located on their desks within their office. This eliminated the need, in most cases, to complete the lengthy forms which had previously been used. Secondly, with the computerised system the clerk keyed in the details in an 'interactive mode' with the computer. That is, the VDU displayed a series of questions and the clerk had to fill in the relevant answers. The ordering of inputting was, therefore, determined by the program rather than the clerk. The system was designed to be 'user-friendly', that is, it was highly simplified. Moreover, the computer now did the calculations involved in determining the orders, accounts, salaries, and so on. In other words, the clerk was now required to undertake fewer arithmetical tasks. The computer calculated the order according to the guidelines; however, it was possible for the clerks to override the computer so that they could give discounts. Thirdly, a great deal of the documentation which had to be sent to customers was no longer produced by hand. The computer automatically printed this out, and the documents were then sent on to the customer. Fourthly, clerks were able to use the system to call up details of

orders; hence when handling queries they made less frequent resort to the files. In sum, the key feature of the computerised system was that it reduced the amount of paperwork; it also reduced the need for clerks to do arithmetical calculations. As a result it took less time to carry out the work tasks.

But the computerised system also required new skills from the clerical staff. In addition to the need to be able to use the new system, its efficient utilisation required a greater range of knowledge on the part of the clerk. This, it should be stressed, was not technologically but economically determined. If the system was to be efficient then it was necessary that clerks should be able to handle a range of routine tasks. If this was not the case then inputting would be slow and the person inputting would continually have to go to ask the advice of other clerks. Previously, clerical work had been less highly graded and paid than other types of work in the company and this had encouraged high turnover. It was therefore decided to rectify this by upgrading jobs in order to obtain clerical staff who would have the skills and ability to use the computer system efficiently. At the same time, the elimination of a great deal of the paperwork reduced the workload of the sales services department. It was decided to eliminate this section, incorporating most of the staff into the marketing department.

In formal terms, the computerised system was associated with an upgrading of clerical staff and the elimination of a number of jobs. For example, when the regrading was introduced the number of jobs in the highest three grades more than doubled while the number in

the lowest grade was almost halved. It is, however, difficult to provide an accurate figure for the scale of job loss which was directly attributable to computer processing. This is because it is necessary to consider not only its effects on workloads, but also the more general attempts of management to save on staff during this period. In addition, the move to computer processing was associated with a streamlining of products designed to make the company more attractive to the public. If the actual scale of job loss directly associated with the key phase of introducing the computer system is considered, then it was less than ten per cent, coming primarily from the lower grades.

While the VDU became central to the process of handling orders in the new system, it would be wrong to suggest that it dominated the work of all the clerical staff. Certain parts of personnel records, for example, were not incorporated in the new system and so the traditional forms were used. While the files became less central, they were still important. The computer system did not include all the details which might be necessary to deal with queries while original documents still had to be filed away for future reference. In addition, the need to deal with customers' queries remained: while the VDU was used to call up information, it still meant that a good deal of time was spent in talking to customers.

The exact pattern of organisation in departments after the introduction of the computerised system varied. In some cases, for example, administrators allocated people daily to handling the telephone and others to inputting data. However, it is clear from

the investigations which were undertaken in the company on the health aspects of VDU use that very few people in any of the departments spent even the bulk of their working time on the VDU.

The move to a computerised system, then, led to some job loss, improved grading and pay, and also had a considerable impact upon the nature of work. In particular, the amount of paperwork and filing undertaken was reduced, although far from entirely removed. The rationalisation of the organisation of work in the offices marginally extended the long-term trend towards less clerical and administrative task discretion. Clerks, in particular, had less frequent need to use their own arithmetical skills; but for many of the staff this was not seen as a disadvantage.

Union organisation

There were two recognised unions on the site which between them covered all workers from supervisors down. The supervisors and clerical workers were organised into the ACTSS, the non-manual section of the TGWU, to which the manual workers belonged (maintenance and production workers and the lorry drivers). The former had seventy-eight members representing about eighty per cent of its potential membership and the latter had about 450 members, 100 per cent of their potential.

Manual union representatives met in the TGWU's textiles, clothing and footwear regional committee, and also in a district advisory committee. The TGWU branch at the site was well represented on

both these committees. However, the ACTSS played no role in relation to these committees, although entitled to. Furthermore it appeared that no attempt was made to develop a co-ordinated strategy towards changes in the industry so the main function of these committees was the exchange of information. The fact that the district advisory committee was virtually moribund during most of the 1970s, when major changes occurred at the site, also precluded any attempts at strategic co-ordination by the union.

Within the company co-ordination between the non-manual and manual unions was fairly highly developed. In the early 1970s, when the non-manual workers were first organised, the two branches came together and formed a joint negotiating committee (JNC), and a trade union advisory committee to deal with their relations with the company. The function of the JNC was, as its name suggests, to conduct negotiations with the management, and on it sat the chairpersons of the two branches, and the district secretary (full-time official) of the TGWU. The two lay representatives also sat on the advisory committee, which was a joint policy making committee for both these branches, where they were joined by both branch secretaries and a shop steward from each to form a committee of six members. The size of individual union representation on this advisory committee was relatively unimportant, however, since decisions were reached by consensus, and had to be ratified by individual union branches. This structure led them to hold formal joint discussions on matters of common interest such as pensions and redundancies. In particular the chairperson of the non-manual union would meet the senior representatives of the manual union

where there would be frequent exchange of information. The supervisors belonged to the ACTSS branch but there certainly was no traditional animosity between shop-floor and supervisors and contacts between the two unions were close.

Regular meetings of the advisory committee took place once per month, but special meetings particularly in relation to wage claims or redundancies increased this to a yearly average of approximately eighteen meetings. The advisory committee was the place where differences between the two branches were sorted out. It was an unwritten rule that the interests of all the workers prevailed over those of a specific section. At times this rule would be used to bring one section 'into line'. The unity of the advisory committee at times appeared to be in the balance during the period studied, particularly in relation to the pay negotiations between 1982 and 1983.

Another rule seemed to be that if the advisory committee was unable to resolve an issue, or agree that a management proposal was acceptable, it would adjourn for a few hours. In the meantime the JNC would often have an instant meeting with the personnel department to try to get a new offer or a compromise proposal which might lead to agreement on the advisory committee. In general when the JNC met as such, it was mainly to exchange information or draft a claim or statement. Most of its meetings were with the personnel department.

Sources of power

In the ACTSS branch, general business and policy formulation were carried out by the branch committee. This consisted of two officials and four shop stewards, elected every two years at mass meetings of the branch. For the latter group during the period 1975-83 there were occasions when there were more nominees than places, but both the officials were at all times elected unopposed. At the time of the study the branch chairperson and secretary had held office for at least ten years, but with the exception of one steward other members had only been on the committee for the last five years or less. Major changes in the composition of the branch committee occurred in 1978-79, and at the 1982 elections, both periods being after the introduction of the synthetic fibre production area. The changes appear to have been due more to retirement of old members from the company, or promotion to supervisor, than to any political struggles within the union. Taking into account both regular and special meetings, the branch committee met on average at least every month, and all members invariably attended, unless ill or on holiday.

As well as electing the branch committee, ACTSS branch members also elected shop stewards to represent different departments in the company. Shop steward elections were also held every two years, and took place alternatively with the branch committee elections. The number of shop stewards increased from six to eight in 1981 to accommodate changes in work organisation and to recognise the specific nature of the synthetic fibre production area and establish

it as a separate shop stewards' constituency. These changes were introduced after an examination by a standing sub-committee on branch organisation which reported to the branch committee in 1979.

The shop stewards' committee, to which all the eight stewards belonged, had undergone more extensive change than the branch committee. Between the beginning of 1975 and the end of 1978 membership of the shop stewards' committee was stable, but after the 1979 elections half of the committee consisted of new stewards. This change was largely a consequence of reorganisation of steward constituencies mentioned above, resulting in the disappearance of certain old constituencies, and hence the stewards from them. Shortly after these elections the branch agreed that workers in the new area could have their own steward, and another member joined the committee.

Subsequent changes are more difficult to trace, but perhaps mainly because of redundancies, the pace of steward turnover seemed to have remained high. In 1983, for example, thirty per cent of the newly elected committee consisted of new stewards (although at least one person had held office some years previously). The change in the proportion of textile production representation, and in individual membership of the stewards' committee was perhaps not that significant insofar as the shop stewards' committee appeared to function as a channel of communication rather than a decision-making committee. It was less important than the branch committee and branch meetings, and did not meet regularly but was convened

whenever deemed necessary by the branch chairperson, on average once per two or three months.

However, particularly since 1980, the ACTSS branch and the personnel department had supported a conscious move towards more local discussions and negotiations between shop stewards and departmental managers over the implementation of various productivity exercises. Issues involved new working practices and new procedures for relief. This began to strengthen the role of the shop stewards; the stewards' committee meetings became more important and they started to take place more frequently.

The ACTSS branch as a whole met regularly at approximately monthly intervals, with additional meetings if decisions had to be taken on pressing matters. The ordinary meetings were held out of work time, but urgent meetings could be held during working hours, with management agreement. Although the branch meetings were held on the site, attendance at ordinary meetings was low, averaging less than fifteen people during 1975-83 (many of them shop stewards or officials). Special meetings, by contrast, were attended by an average of forty members.

In summary, there were two lines in the structure of the ACTSS textile production branch: the formal branch organisation with a branch committee of six people (including two officials) elected by the branch members, and a shop stewards' organisation consisting (since 1981) of eight stewards elected by members in their

constituency. Elections took place in alternate years, although there was considerable overlap between the two organisations and most of the 'senior' shop stewards were on the branch committee which acted as the main policy making body. The two branch officials who sat on the advisory committee and the JNC played a particularly important role in policy formulation and in overseeing the future of the branch.

Insofar as principal negotiations with the company were conducted through the negotiating and advisory committees, union structure at the workplace appeared fairly centralised. This impression was supported by examination of the membership of various union committees, and of negotiating and consultative committees. Thus in the ACTSS branch, a small number of members had been on the committee for many years, and were well-informed about developments in the company. The most influential union representative at the workplace was the chairperson of the branch, who was not only a key member of her branch committee and shop stewards' committee but also the chairperson of the advisory committee and the JNC.

The effect of negotiating issues such as pay and general working conditions through the advisory committee itself imposed limits upon the branch's freedom. ACTSS branch members, for example, were on at least one occasion advised by their committee members not to pass a resolution detailing pay negotiating targets, but simply to indicate general goals, since to do so would tie the hands of their representatives in the advisory committee, making it difficult to

reach an agreement there. On at least two occasions the administrators were obliged to drop resistance to a final pay offer. At times the transport workers' group also had to accept they were in a minority on an issue. It can be argued, of course, that the union structure worked precisely because it disciplined the various sections.

It would be wrong, however, to over-emphasise these centralist features since in the actual practice of decision-making, members did exert more than just formal influence. At the start of pay negotiations the ACTSS branch committee, for example, discussed possibilities in some detail, and then took recommendations to the branch meeting. These were usually endorsed there, and then detailed negotiations proceeded in the trade union advisory committee. Decisions reached at the joint union meetings and in the JNC had to be ratified by both the non-manual and manual union branches. While it seemed that the branch meetings always accepted the advice of their committee over the details of such negotiations, they decisively rejected proposals from the committee on at least two other occasions. Both of which involved the branch taking action concerning relations outside the company. It seemed, therefore, that 'centralisation' of decision-making over issues affecting the branch or workplace as a whole reflected members' trust in their officials and negotiators to secure the best possible deal, for where members were opposed to something the officials would have liked to have done, they had no hesitation in attending branch meetings to prevent such actions.

In this context it should also be noted that there was a considerable although not clearly defined area of 'local' issues, which were discussed and on which decisions were made at departmental level and between departments. As mentioned, the importance of these local discussions and negotiations had increased in the 1980s. The main reason had been the series of productivity negotiations which left details on change in working practices to be sorted out departmentally. Typically these negotiations, involving departmental management and shop stewards, concerned the arrangement of holidays and reliefs. Previously such issues would have been dealt with by branch officials. Local negotiations also increasingly embraced questions about job content or settling the details of amalgamating work organisation in two sections of a department. The principle of the latter change had been discussed at company level negotiations, and in consultation with stewards and following agreement at departmental level, shop stewards and local management held further talks to plan the actual process of amalgamation. This particular case is interesting in that the stewards were unable to reach agreement, but instead of the issue being resolved by management, the issue was discussed in the ACTSS branch committee, and then at a branch meeting, which voted on how the problem was to be resolved and ensured it was implemented in that way.

The imposition by the branch of a decision on members of one section illustrated one of the key principles by which the branch was guided: that the interests of the members as a whole were

paramount. This perspective was expressed particularly in the context of the branch's long-term strategy. The branch chairperson and the committee took the view that since the industry was stagnating or declining, then their role had to be to conserve jobs as much as possible, but also to facilitate changes in work organisation and the introduction of new technology, insofar as they offered long-term prospects of job preservation, even if in the short-term jobs were lost. Where immediate job loss was accepted as inevitable, then they sought to obtain the best possible terms for those members, and to ensure that other changes did not lead members to lose out financially. The same applied to how sections on the advisory committee were made to accept that the interests of the majority of the workforce prevailed over sectional interests. At times the continued existence of the union structure had depended upon one section of the workforce giving up a particular claim for others.

Union strategy

Since the formation of the joint union structure in the early 1970s, the pattern had been that management would inform the unions of any intended change in staffing levels, work or work organisation. These changes would not be imposed but they formed the subject of central and increasingly departmental discussion. Particularly on issues related to working practices (job demarcation, job content) or the internal labour market (training, recruitment, promotion,

dismissals) ACTSS had a considerable amount of influence on the outcome of such company and departmental discussions.

From the late 1970s onwards the pace of change had quickened and the introduction of the synthetic fibre production area only marginally compensated for the many unfavourable changes the union faced resulting in over twenty per cent job loss and much tighter staffing levels. However, these unfavourable changes were all negotiated. So, although the falling sales and the difficult economic climate in which the company operated must have reduced the power of the union to fundamentally change or oppose management's plans for change, the pattern of control appeared to have changed little in any substantial way. The following describes this pattern in more detail.

When the outline decision to invest in synthetic fibre production was taken by the company board both unions were immediately informed. There was no attempt to seriously influence the early decisions about plant lay-out or degree of automation. However, once the new area began to take shape, the ACTSS branch in particular was closely involved in discussions about staffing levels, grading, job demarcation, supervision, recruitment and training. On these issues the union did have an influence, within the parameters of the earlier decisions which had been taken unilaterally by management.

As indicated above, any change in the organisation of the production process would be the subject of company and or department negotiations. An example was the shift to computer aided design and cutting which had a tremendous impact upon the company. This was first investigated by a joint working party of management and unions in 1979, but not implemented. It was eventually introduced in 1981 after further detailed negotiations. In particular the willingness of the ACTSS branch to accept, in general, change in working practices had helped to contain conflicts over the past five years whilst keeping some measure of trade union control over the pace and direction of change. Moreover, the strong commitment of both unions separately and jointly to defending the interests of the individual workers and minimising the effects of change on the workforce had given a basis to the unions' position on these matters.

Pay issues were negotiated between the JNC and the personnel department. One of the most important activities of the advisory committee was to prepare the claim put forward by the JNC by finding common ground between the two union groups and trying to maintain such a balance during the negotiations. Job evaluation and sickness pay were also controlled, each by a separate joint working party. The union representatives on the working party were involved in monitoring individual sickness records. The only earnings-related issue which was influenced departmentally was the relief of people on a higher grade.

Working conditions and health and safety issues were mainly dealt with in the company joint health and safety committee or directly in discussions between the shop steward and departmental manager. Serious matters might have been discussed in both forums. In general the shop steward clearly would be involved in the analysis of any problems relating to working conditions and in the search for solutions. Often problems would be first identified by members or directly by shop stewards, who then pressed management to make alterations in production methods or invest in superior equipment.

An example was the problem of dust for workers in the old building when handling some of the raw materials. On various occasions this was brought up in health and safety meetings between 1979 and 1982 but the company, although recognising the problem, wanted to avoid investing in this area. It appeared that to the shop stewards health and safety was one of the most important issues, which was helped by the fact that the company accepted responsibility for high standards of health and safety and that meetings took place regularly every month. Where shop stewards felt they were making no progress with the department manager on a particular issue, they could always take it to the branch chairperson or secretary to raise on the joint health and safety committee or on the advisory committee or JNC. Although informal support from a branch official was sought occasionally, very few health and safety matters in fact ended up on the agenda of negotiations.

A reduction of basic working time had been claimed in each of the annual pay rounds between 1979 and 1983, however, the only change had been one extra day's holiday. There was considerable trade union influence in holiday arrangements. In some instances rotas were drawn up by the shop steward, in others they were decided by the workers and stewards, and ratified or occasionally vetoed by the departmental manager.

There was an official disciplinary and appeals procedure. In cases of major breach of discipline, such as theft or continued poor time-keeping, before the company imposed any sanction a formal hearing would be held by the assistant personnel manager and relevant branch chairperson. Often the latter would be able to soften sanctions by the company if it was felt reasonable, for example, because of mitigating circumstances. A minor sanction was a written warning which would stay on the individual's record for a period of two years. Before this happened the relevant shop steward would most likely have been involved. In general, disciplinary matters were the subject of joint discussion.

Traditionally the union played a strong role in relation to the internal labour market. This was, of course, underpinned by the eighty per cent union membership. All vacancies were advertised internally. When there were insufficient applicants the vacancies were readvertised internally, on the insistence of the ACTSS branch. It is interesting to note that before administrators' and supervisors' jobs were advertised the union's branch committee and

the personnel department agreed upon the desirable profile of the workforce. They had to be young for the former and not on the highest grades for the latter. Young, because they would have fewer problems in understanding the new technology; not on the highest grade, so that loss of bonus payments could be partially compensated by a promotion to the supervisor grade.

In general, all posts above the lowest grades (general clerks) were first opened to the workers in the department involved. This led to clear career patterns within a department. Many supervisors had started in the very department they were supervising, and nearly all supervisors had started work for the company in the group (production, distribution, marketing, personnel) they were supervising. Moreover, one case was quoted in personnel where particular labour problems could only be solved by replacing a young university graduate, as manager, by an ex-supervisor who originated from the shop-floor.

Procedures, selection and programmes for technical training were jointly agreed. In the case of the training of VDU operators, the training programme was discussed in detail by the ACTSS branch committee. The company trained some workers from each group to become instructors, who then could train others in that group. (Whilst working as instructor the worker involved received a small daily training allowance). This system of instruction had been agreed with the union and it gave the branch a fair degree of control over training.

A complaint made by the clerical group about training appeared to be that this group of workers were primarily taught how to use the equipment; they learnt little about the actual job processes and why the equipment was supposed to work. The training for the administrators had been much more comprehensive. The explanation given to the branch committee by management was that because there were far fewer administrators than clerks, there was less chance for on-the-job training.

In 1982 as part of one of the productivity exercises the company wanted to end its own youth training and apprentice scheme. This was successfully resisted by both unions who saw continuing the take-up of at least some youngsters as a priority, even at a time of redundancies. In general the youth training scheme was seen as a joint issue and the employment by the company of the youngsters completing the scheme as a matter for negotiation between the company and the union involved.

Negotiations about redundancy took place in a number of stages. The first stage was a general discussion between the company and the unions' branch officials where management would unfold their planned savings, how they hoped to achieve them and how many jobs they thought this would cost. This was discussed and when the general contours of the problem were agreed, terms for the redundancies were agreed. After that the stage was set for discussions between departmental management and shop stewards to

consider ways of making savings and to specify how many jobs were to be lost.

Any redundancies agreed departmentally had to be ratified at the JHC and there had been on occasions talks on transfers between departments. In some cases volunteers from the clerical group had been rejected by the ACTSS branch committee because their departure would have led to unnecessary job loss. Most of the actual implementation of the productivity exercises involved very lengthy discussions about detail between the personnel department and the chairperson of the joint trade union bodies.

The union played a very strong role in welfare matters. It could be said that this was where they benefitted from the company's traditional paternalism. It meant that both workers and management would expect shop stewards and branch officials to protect individual workers as much as possible, within the departmental and company rules (mainly unwritten), on discipline. It also involved a wide range of fringe benefits and a social club at the workplace administered by the company.

Summarising the union strategy, there was a strong trade union influence upon most issues relating to individual jobs and pay, working conditions, the allocation of tasks and the movement of workers between jobs, discipline and welfare matters. Most initiatives seemed to come from management, but management's freedom to change work and work organisation was clearly subject to

the custom and practice of union policies and negotiations. However, when it came to changes in product or plant, it was more likely that the consequences of such changes would be negotiated, than the changes themselves.

Several further points can be made about trade union strategy. There were clear differences in outlook between the non-manual and manual union groups at the workplace. The manual union had a traditional concern for job protection and in the period investigated was relatively successful in resisting changes in established working practices. The ACTSS branch appeared to be the least sectional group. For example, in 1980 and 1981, they put the issue of 'redundancies and reorganisations at other blanket manufacturers in the UK and their implications for the company' on the agenda of discussions between the unions. The ACTSS branch clearly had been most concerned about the future of the company.

Apart from the personalities of the branch officials, which had something to do with these differences, there seemed to be two, more structural, explanations. Firstly, although both union groups were part of the TGWU it was the non-manual section, the ACTSS branch, which was clearly integrated into the wider union outside the company. It was better informed about the industry at large and it was more likely to look for its own policy development to wider policy discussions in the trade union movement. Other examples of its more outward-looking attitudes were the branch's involvement in the local trades council, and its affiliation to the Labour Research

Department. A second explanation was that it represented a more diverse group than the manual workers, ranging from the very experienced supervisors on the top grades to much lower paid general clerks. There was no identifiable sectional or occupational interests binding the seventy-eight members together.

Thus, as indicated, there were considerable differences in outlook and strategy between the non-manual and manual union groups. But although at times these differences came to the fore, in most circumstances these were tempered or transcended by the policy development on the joint union bodies. The main guardians of the continued existence of the joint union structure were, perhaps unsurprisingly, the ACTSS branch chairperson, the TGWU full-time district official and the personnel manager who, each for their own reasons, feared the sectionalism which would probably have emerged if the joint structures fell apart. The strategy of the joint union bodies can be summarised as acceptance of the need for change in working practices but strong insistence that the pace of change should be controlled and that the changes themselves should be properly negotiated within the established procedures. Concessions by one group of workers should be matched by concessions from others and sections at times had to accept that the priorities of a majority could overrule their own concerns.

The construction of the synthetic fibre production area was seen as a direct or indirect benefit to all groups at the workplace. It was accepted that the technology would be more modern than the

older production area and the work organisation considerably different, with lower staffing levels and high flexibility. There were no differences of interest between the union groups and, indeed, the new production area was not in any way a major topic of discussion of the JHC or advisory committee in the period until 1983. Partly perhaps because of its greater concern for the future of the company, but mainly because some of its own members were directly involved, the main union involvement in the construction and introduction of the synthetic fibre area came from the ACTSS branch.

Metals Technology

This study focussed upon a metals technology centre. It provided research and development facilities for its associates and others as contract work. In some of these the company was designated an equal partner and the centre was moving increasingly towards the conventional contract research and development situation. In terms of employment this was a small company. Total employment in 1983 was 162, all at the one centre. Of these, forty worked in the materials and processing division; twenty-five in finance and administration; and the remainder in one of seven other divisions (see below).

During 1981-84, industrial difficulties associated with the economic recession over-shadowed both the affairs of the company and those of its members. This was particularly noticeable in respect of

income from subscriptions from affiliated organisations due to a number of resignations and receiverships. Members had also been indicating to the centre the difficulties they were having in meeting their committed subscriptions to outside bodies, and were reviewing this kind of expenditure with increasing frequency during this period.

Economy measures and restructuring took effect during 1982-84 and operating costs during these years represented in real terms a decline from those incurred in 1981. One of the main contributions to these savings was a reduction in staff costs associated with a decrease in staff employed between 1981 and 1984. In 1981 the number of staff employed was 171 and, as already mentioned, at the end of 1983 was 162.

The source of income was divided between the UK government, UK commercial and overseas sources. Income from government sources was about forty per cent from both government and commercial sources, whilst the remainder came from overseas. Overseas income showed an increase over the year prior to 1982, despite the economic recession. In 1981, the company's annual report indicated that it was the intention of the centre to encourage greater overseas involvement, and the figures for the following years illustrate a degree of success in attaining this objective (Metals Technology Centre 1981).

Consultancies, services and product sales also showed a considerable increase during 1982-84. This reflected the modification of the centre's policy with regard to building up its commercial activities, including consultancy and services and the manufacture and sale of certain goods. During 1982-84 an increasing demand for these commodities was noted, which emphasised the policy in earning revenue in a situation of declining demand for research activities.

Financing from government agencies continued to be a principal source of income. Leading supporting bodies were boards and units through the Department of Industry and the Department of Energy. Relations with government departments appeared to be extremely good, but programmes funded by the Department of Industry came under some pressure due to difficulties associated with lack of industrial support. The centre had been unable, in some cases, to utilise the full allocation of funds made available by the Department. The centre was beginning to work hard to diversify, not only its services, but also its sources of funding; and discussions were held during 1982-83 with respect to the private financing of a major project for the refining of secondary lead. Relations with universities were given high priority and a number of projects had been given support by the Science and Engineering Research Council.

Despite the economic recession, therefore, the financial position of the centre was beginning to improve. 1984's report noted 'a slight improvement in the degree of activity being experienced', and

expected it to persist into 1985 (Metals Technology Centre 1984). The centre was continuing to evolve in order to maximise the opportunities for its expertise and facilities, and was maintaining a policy of containing costs whilst offering an expanding programme to its many supporting members.

The company's lowest level of organisation consisted of nine small divisions, some of whom employed only a few people. For example, the commercial division and the ferrous operations division both had a staff of only five, the technical services group nine; and the largest group of staff, forty, as mentioned above, worked in the materials and processing division. There were also five directors involved in finance and administration, commerce, as well as all the functions of operations.

In the co-ordination of management there were committees of council and panels which played an important role. They met regularly, at least once a month and some each week, and included all division managers, directors and representatives from the committees and panels. These had a wide remit, including the involvement of many industrial relations issues. From the point of view of this case study the most important senior management functions were those of the director-general, finance and administration director, and commercial director. Informal and formal contacts between these directors clearly led to the decisions which changed the research and development programme of the centre.

The generally dominant role of two divisions, materials and processing, and finance and administration, can be explained by the fact that the materials and processing manager controlled the research which was absolutely essential for all other division managers. The finance and administration division had a say in all industrial relations matters. Its importance had been boosted by senior management's unease over the employment legislation of the 1970s, for example, the Health and Safety at Work Act of 1974. There is a further explanation. Some of the younger up-and-coming managers seemed to be concentrated in these departments. A few of the people involved in the strategic thinking that went into the development and implementation of policy changes have since achieved considerable promotion in the management hierarchy. It is also interesting to note that some of these people were involved in the union in the early 1980s.

The divisional managers' function was to control the execution of research, have responsibility for business along specific guidelines, or both. Apart from the two referred to above, divisional managers played little part in policy-making and in the planning of new research or commercial developments that might be introduced into their division. Although in recent years some attempts had been made to boost division managers' discretion by stressing their accountability as a profit centre, these managers depended for their research projects or operational budgets on the finance and administration division, and were constrained in their industrial relations by the same division. A third division which should be

mentioned is the ferrous operations division which came into being towards the end of 1981 in line with the centre's intention to market contract research more aggressively. As will be seen below these three divisions together played a crucial role in the introduction of management information techniques for staff working in the company.

The division of labour

In order to discuss in some detail the division of labour at the company, it is convenient to refer to four different types of occupational groups. Research officers, who were largely located in the materials processing division, were doing the work of design engineers and research controllers. Research technicians also located in the materials and processing division were mainly metallurgists engaged in research and development; either in roles supporting research officers or in jobs requiring a small degree of responsibility, where they worked either in small groups or individually. There were other smaller groups of technicians in the company, such as those working in the ferrous operations division. Their job was to operate tests on metals, really in a quality control function, and it was their job to advise that work should be temporarily halted if they were not satisfied with the quality of metals. Technical services technicians worked on the overhaul and maintenance of complex electronic equipment. Servicing these research and development activities were administrative and clerical staff in the various divisions.

Research officers were located in a separate building, although part of the main plant, in a newly built research block designed to provide an atmosphere in which research could be carried out. The structure of the materials and processing division was that beneath the division manager one senior officer was in charge of research, another in charge of development, and both these officers ran projects with a team for each.

There was no doubt that, within the company, the materials and processing division was looked upon as a high status group, and that those who worked within it were regarded as being of a 'different cut' from the rest of the workers. There was an academic atmosphere about the workplace, and a feeling that the 'high-powered' people in the company were largely to be found within it. Most of the graduates recruited by the company went into this division; and the majority of its research officers possessed PhDs.

The research technicians were generally attached to separate projects directed by these graduate research officers. These grades normally worked in the new research block. The research technicians were not only the most highly qualified of the company's technicians, they were also the largest occupational group. They usually worked in small groups of four or five in the laboratories. Their importance in providing norms of the work community and many of the leaders of the union went beyond their numerical importance.

In general it appeared that research officers and research technicians were a relatively self-confident and successful group enjoying good work relationships but gaining their highest satisfaction from the content of their work. They did not compare themselves to management for pay purposes nor were they jealous of their material conditions. These groups of workers seemed to see membership of the union in terms of a common economic interest which provided them with a base for their more individualistic approach to perceived distinctions in professional knowledge and qualifications. They were much more involved in union activity than other technical groups or the administrative and clerical staff.

Technicians' work in the ferrous operations division involved the alignment of prototypes and new products, and diagnosis of faulty design or poor quality in the products. They were usually located in small groups of two or three near to the laboratories and occasionally they joined research teams in the laboratories. This laboratory work could be intensely interesting but on testing projects was often long, tedious and repetitious. Typical comments referred to 'under-utilisation' and 'vegetating'; comments endorsed by the division manager. This was also confirmed by the fact that while the majority found their interest in work gave them 'quite a bit of satisfaction', they considered that their level of satisfaction depended upon what they were working on at any one time. These grades were regarded by the ferrous operations manager as those of technicians with access to a career ladder. An opening existed for horizontal transfer into the junior research

technician grade, but they were generally people who started keen but had not made the grade as a research technician was the division manager's explanation. Others in middle management put it differently, emphasising the need for 'those with creativity as well as critical faculties'.

The other type of technician were those in the technical services division responsible for maintaining and adjusting the complex testing equipment. On occasions they had to adapt or build their own equipment in order to test newly designed products coming from the laboratories. Their work was crucial in all areas of the establishment, but it was work which could often be done by the users of the equipment. When urgent work occurred 'testing technicians' from the ferrous operations division were seconded to this job.

Opinions varied on the work content of the job. Technicians from the technical services division claimed that the range of equipment they worked with was wider than in any other job; and that they had to diagnose faults with a minimum of information. Most other technicians including 'testing technicians' as they called themselves, worked to instructions. Division managers felt that only when a major fault occurred were major diagnostic skills required and most of the work was extremely mundane.

Gouldner (1954) distinguished two main categories of administrator: 'cosmopolitans' and 'locals'. 'Cosmopolitans' are administrators with little loyalty to the organisation but much more committed to

their specialised skills. They think of themselves primarily as professionals owing a loyalty to the standards of work accepted as adequate by professional colleagues. 'Locals' are administrators with great loyalty to the organisation but with little commitment to outside groups. They think of themselves as 'company men'.

Such groups were distinguishable among the administrators at the centre. The first were professional metallurgists who were responsible for all the major technical decisions taken within the company. The second were wholly to be found in the finance and administration division. The prevailing management ideology was that of the professional metallurgist.

The distinction was most marked among technical staff of the centre. These were people whose attitudes to their work appeared to be very similar to those of their employers with whom they were closely associated in their work roles, and with whom they desired to be identified. The distinction lay in their attitude to the company as opposed to their wider identification with an occupational or professional group. It appeared in the roles they played within organisations attached to the work environment. For example, the administrators' involvement in the union was almost wholly to be found among the 'cosmopolitans'.

Gouldner suggested that tension in an organisation is alleviated when superiors and subordinates support the rules which fit in with their work values and confer status on those who conform. Deviations are explained by well-intentioned carelessness or

ignorance, since it would be thought impossible for values to be disputed. Authority is based upon accepted knowledge and expertise. Formal rules are buttressed by feelings of solidarity and participation in a joint enterprise.

The work organisation and technology at the metals technology centre was such that project teams were bound to constitute groups of individuals from different grades within the formal hierarchy of the firm co-operating in the successful attainment of a shared goal. Burns and Stalker (1961) saw communications with such groups between persons of different ranks tending to take the form of 'lateral' consultations rather than the 'vertical' exercise of authority. This was certainly true within the immediate work situation of the 'cosmopolitan' administrators and technicians.

There remains, however, another system of rewards beside that by which prestige is received and awarded informally; that related to the formal occupational status. (This can be referred to as the 'market situation', following Lockwood 1958). This was strongly influenced by the formal industrial relations in which the 'locals' predominated. Despite the existence of shared values and informal norms within the work environment, the technical groups displayed sharply distinguishable behaviour patterns in their relations with administrators from the finance and administration division. In order to explain these distinctions it is useful to distinguish between those administrative groups whose needs in terms of work satisfaction could only be fulfilled through their employment at the centre and who were unable to identify themselves with any groups

other than those defined by senior management, and those who looked upon employment at the centre as a means to fulfilling their 'professional' vocation and their individual career aspirations. This aspect is explored more fully below.

The fourth occupational group focussed upon within the study was the clerical staff. Almost every clerical function in the company was involved in the computer system, one way or another. Some of the clerical groups worked for more than one division, for example, materials and processing and ferrous operations; and a major concern within the centre was how the remaining and possibly new work would be organised, that is, divided among various job functions. The automation made more time available and the workers as well as the management had ideas on how to improve the work organisation. However, this chapter is only concerned with discussing the work experience of different types of workers, and their role in the workplace organisation.

In the long-term automation may bring about a different division of labour for the clerical staff. At the time of the study, the work was broadly divided according to specific groups, which led to problems in interchanging staff. In future, more uniform working methods may lead to a widening of the function range per worker, but also to new demarcations. However, it was only a small firm, and flexibility was very important, which is likely to act as a brake on such a development. Besides, such changes were beginning to be settled at division level and the people involved had some control over this.

Together, the materials and processing, and ferrous operations divisions had fourteen clerks. The function of this group of clerks was to administer the planning of the flow of materials. At the time of the research, this was done through files of their own and all kinds of operating procedures which they developed themselves (passing on and checking orders, reserving materials from stock, and so on). The planning would be arranged by using the computer which could print surveys. The main savings to be made by computer use would be in the time needed for contacts with other divisions and in the time taken to list certain data. The latter also applied to the allocation of orders to the available research or development capacity. The computer program showed, neatly arranged, where capacity was available in the various divisions, so that orders could be allocated quickly and effectively. In addition, both for the flow of materials and allocation of work, those planning would be able to obtain information at once from problem areas. Because of the extra data that would be available on the progress of the work, those planning would be able to solve the problems more effectively and adapt accordingly.

The commercial division was involved in the direct marketing of the company's activities. The work of the four clerks involved looking up details of products in sales catalogues, the majority of this data was being put into the computer, and writing out order forms. At the time of the study this was still being done manually by the clerks. When the product details are stored in the computer a technician will be able to type them on the terminal and an order form will be printed. This will increase the standardisation of

the parts used. The computer may also be used for technical calculation and for different formulae, although the software for this had still to be developed. This may result in further time saving.

Despite the increasing importance of this division, the work requiring lower qualifications was under threat. For example, the writing of order forms was done by an order clerk, but after completion of the automation the technicians could do this work themselves, in the form of operating the terminal. It was unclear to management and the trade union officials what would happen to this job then. Other clerical work could also be done away with, shared, or both. This would affect the clerks' position, because their work, which had previously been divided up according to broad divisional functions, could be more readily undertaken by other colleagues. They would be less indispensable, and staff would be more interchangeable. Here too, increased control of their own work due to improved availability of information, would be coupled with an increase in the sharing of control by colleagues and superiors.

In the technical services division the work of the three clerks involved mainly typing. A large part of the work of the job preparation clerk was no longer necessary. Entered into the computer, the work instruction and materials data could be worked out by re-working previous instructions on the terminal. The writing of forms was no longer necessary, as well as the corresponding typing. A time recorder converted work forms into

survey-lists of the hours worked for progress control purposes. This work was also in the process of completely being taken over by the computer. Furthermore, the detail planning clerk's work was disappearing because this could be done directly by a technician, and this information would then be available on the terminal for division managers.

In the future, information on progress would be directly available. There would be no need to locate various people to find the causes of problems, and decisions could then be made directly. In the technical services division, then, some of the effects of computerisation were directly visible and had no need to come under the broader categories, as in the other divisions, of changes in responsibilities resulting from 'organisation developments', 'reorganisations', and so on. The tasks could easily be distributed amongst the other clerks or technical workers.

In the finance and administration division there were nine clerks. The work mainly involved, in practice, both analyses of forecasting and planning progress in order to improve financial control; and a personnel function. An important aspect of the financial control function was the setting up of budgetary control, which entailed the creation of standard costs, as well as of estimated research and development allocation; and the regular comparison of actual costs and financial allocation with the forecasts. Among the many areas this division was concerned with in its personnel functions were recruitment of staff, education and training, working conditions and safety, welfare, and industrial relations.

This work involved less of the more boring and lowly-qualified tasks of other divisions, but also, because of computerisation, the disappearance of their own files and the corresponding systems. It also meant less contact with colleagues. This work now involved fewer skills as the computer operators did not need to have a complete range of data at their disposal. These were being replaced by the skill needed to operate the terminal. There would be more control over the work because of the increased availability of information. At the same time this control would be shared by all the staff because the private files would be replaced by data bases which would be available to other divisions. For management, the possibility of controlling the accounting work would also be increased partly due to increased standardisation.

It seemed that working conditions were improving because staff were able to look up the information needed by way of the terminal and they would not have to proceed in a hurried or improvised way when under pressure. On the other hand, productivity was expected to increase so that staff would have fewer opportunities to take rests or to chat with others, and so on.

From the preceding description of the four occupational groups it can be seen that there were at least two sharply different patterns of interaction within the division of labour. On the one hand, the function of research officers and technicians, and of 'cosmopolitan' administrators coincided with that described by Sayles (1959) as 'conservative'. These people were aware of their strength, not just as union members, but as members of an occupational grouping of

wider significance. They could accept the time-consuming routine of procedure 'without exploding with frustration'. On the other hand, the functions of the 'local' administrators and clerical staff were much more like that of an 'erratic' group: people who within this very sophisticated environment sometimes had to take on the more tedious jobs. Experiencing a manifestly sharp feeling of status deprivation they were insufficiently sure of their own group identity to behave in a strategically planned manner in pursuit of their goals.

Union organisation

The recent history of workers' organisation within this company was one of transformation from in-house staff association to independent trade union. As will be seen, important dates in this process were 1971, 1975 and 1982. A process of organisational and technological change took place in the same period as the transformation to an independent trade union. There are, however, no clear links between the two. On the one hand, the growth in membership which took place between 1975 and 1982 might have been assisted by the reorganisation within and between divisions and related job loss. On the other hand, the main focus of the trade union organisation in this period was on the transformation. It can be argued that this went on at the expense of trade union involvement in the organisational and technological changes which took place in the same period.

The history of workers' organisation in this metals technology centre was similar to that in many other occupations where, in roughly the same period, the same transformation occurred from staff organisation to becoming part of an independent trade union (see, for example, Crompton and Jones 1984). Some staff associations joined existing unions, such as ASTMS in the centre's case, and others stayed independent and became trade unions. When the centre's staff association joined ASTMS they retained a fair measure of independence. Also the transformation took place fairly fast and successfully with very limited personnel problems. So, even though industrial relations within the company was very informal the union organisation was very different from what it was in 1971.

Prior to 1971 a staff association existed of which all employees were automatically members and which was wholly sponsored by the company. The representative function of the staff association was limited to a mild form of consultation and perhaps some support for individuals in cases of grievances or appeals. In 1971, in the wake of the Conservative Government's Industrial Relations Act, the staff association was turned into an in-house, independently registered trade union. Although at the time the third option of joining an independent TUC affiliated trade union was explicitly rejected, in hindsight this forming of an in-house union can be seen as a step on the way.

What did change compared with the previous situation was that the senior representatives of the new staff union took on a strong role

in consultation and negotiation on pay and conditions. There were few indications that the staff union had any function at division level. What also continued was that the staff union remained very much an in-house organisation consisting of employees on the research officer and research manager grades, some of whom have been promoted to relatively senior posts in the company since their days of involvement in the staff union.

Particularly in companies where technical research officers and technicians became trade unionists in the early and mid-1970s, a sizeable group of workers were members of ASTMS, rather than belonging to an in-house staff union (Jenkins and Sherman 1979). After discussions during 1974 and 1975, in the spring of 1975 the staff union senior representatives decided to recommend to its membership a transfer of engagements to ASTMS. The arguments for joining a national, TUC affiliated trade union were first of all that an attempt to set up an association of metals staff associations from various companies had failed; secondly, that the resources of the staff union were being increasingly stretched; and thirdly, that such affiliation would gain the workers' organisation strength and independence in its dealings with the company.

All ninety-five members of the staff union were balloted in the summer of 1975 on the proposed transfer to ASTMS; eighty voted, seventy approved of the transfer, ten members voted against. The actual transfer of engagements took place in the autumn of 1975. From that date the transformation from staff union to independent trade union accelerated, supported by a growth in membership (in

real terms) since total employment in the company has decreased since 1981.

One event in particular characterised the ongoing transformation, a dispute in 1980. The group officers, successors to the senior representatives, put to the members a ballot on industrial action based upon a number of issues about pay, benefits, redundancy payments and consultation procedures where the willingness of management to compromise and make progress was considered unacceptably low. The issues under consideration in the ballot were outlined in a pamphlet printed by ASTMS, underlining the support the union would given to a decision for industrial action. The membership voted in support of taking industrial action which was an unprecedented indication that the increasingly independent stance of the more active union members was widely supported; even though ultimately no action actually took place.

A comparison of the organisation and strategy of the staff union up to the mid-1970s with the recent situation makes it clear that some things have changed considerably whilst there is continuity in other aspects. The following serves as a summary of this transformation. Firstly, there was more trade union activity below the level of group officers; in some divisions there were reasonably active trade union representatives, even if the negotiating role of these representatives was little more pronounced. There were also lively group meetings held about seven to eight times a year and usually attended by thirty to thirty-five members, about a third of the membership. Secondly, the three officers of the group (secretary,

chairperson and treasurer) were elected annually from the membership by ballot and served as a contact between group representatives and the union branch. The group officers spent far less time on administration of their own affairs and more time on preparing for consultations and negotiations with management. As a body it functioned less formally; on the other hand relations with management had become more structured. There was more emphasis on formal procedural and substantive agreements.

Another change was that the group officers were better informed about external trends in industrial relations than the staff union senior representatives used to be; for example, by the ASTMS research department or the ASTMS divisional official. Whilst in the past involvement in the staff union did not seem to affect career prospects negatively, more recently there was the impression that trade union activity could reduce the chances of being promoted. Finally, there had been a slow trend towards wider trade union involvement. For example, at the time of the transfer to ASTMS there were no representatives or members who also served on other union committees; but by 1983 three representatives had attended the union's annual conference.

However, even though there was more of a local trade union life than during the years of the staff union, the negotiating activities of most local representatives were still very limited; and whilst the monthly meetings of group representatives continued to be the focus of policy discussions, a high proportion of the negotiating, consultative and appeals work of the union was still done by the

group secretary. (The present incumbent had been the secretary since 1975 and had played a crucial role in the transformation from the staff union). There was also still a high level of informal contact between the key union representatives (the group officers) and senior management, both directorate and division managers. Although the transfer to an independent union may have affected industrial relations, it certainly had not ended the flow of informal information and advance notice of planned changes, or affected the access the union had to senior management. Finally, although there was one lower-graded female office representative, the group representatives were still dominated by males on middle and higher grades. Indeed, whilst at least three women were active in the union during the period 1975-78, there was only one woman representative over the whole period 1979-84.

Sources of power

The union organisation within the company formed a separate group within a branch of ASTMS. The group was fairly autonomous. For example, contrary to the position of some ASTMS groups within the branch, it had its own group meetings usually attended by thirty or so members who had considerable freedom to adopt policies for the group. Furthermore, the group had no delegates attending branch meetings. Also the ASTMS divisional officer dealt with industrial relations issues for all but the largest groups within the union branch. In this case study this was not the position. Although no group officers or representatives worked full-time on trade union business, all consultations and negotiations with the company were

undertaken by the group secretary and fellow officers. These measures of autonomy were all agreed upon when the staff union transferred to ASTMS.

The group officers played a central role in all union matters within the company. They were the only body within the group which met monthly or more frequently. Even if division representatives or members' grievances influenced the officers' input into joint meetings with management, in most cases there would have been prior discussion and policy formulation by these officers. A clear indication of how this was reflected in the organisation of the group was the amount of time spent on representation of the workforce. The group secretary spent seventy-five per cent of his working time on industrial relations and trade union work, the chairperson of the group spent on average twenty-five per cent. The other group officer (treasurer) spent on average five hours per week on union matters, whilst of all the other representatives none spent more than five hours weekly and the average was only just over two hours working time spent either with local or senior management, members or other representatives.

The pattern seemed to be that the union group had not really integrated into the wider union, except for receiving advice, which may be because of the way in which the national union is organised. Although the basic structure consists of local branches, divisional councils and the NEC, particularly those members outside the engineering industry seem to be more integrated into occupational or sectional structures. None of the group representatives in the

company had regular contact with ASTMS representatives from other companies, and they were not active in the local union branch. The only interaction between the group and ASTMS took place via the group secretary and the divisional officer, national official or someone from the union's research department.

No other contacts took place between the group and the wider union. For example, on no occasion did a union official sit in on group or joint meetings to discuss a particular issue. From this picture, however, it should not be concluded that the union members did not realise that they were now members of a much larger organisation than the previous staff association. The union's journal was read by a proportion of the membership, representatives estimated that on average forty per cent of the members read the journal, which is probably much higher than in many other industries. The union's booklets on subjects such as new technology, health and safety or equal opportunities seemed to have been read by a good proportion of the members because they led, for example, to questions by members which were discussed at group meetings.

Every year there were elections, by postal ballots, of division representatives. In the 1983 elections the union was entitled to nine representatives; all of these were filled. Compared with 1981 and before, the entitlement had risen by one because of the formation of the company's division concerned with ferrous materials. The number of female representatives, one, had remained the same since the staff union. In 1983 it seemed more difficult for the union to find representatives in the divisions; this had not

been so before 1982. One explanation for the difficulty of finding representatives was that job loss and reorganisation had made members more fearful to put themselves forward as a representative. Most representatives were not contested in 1983 whereas they were in previous elections. Nearly all the members voted which indicates that the difficulty was not that members were uninterested in having a representative, but that too few were prepared to stand themselves.

Division representatives would try to solve problems with local management. If a problem applied to more divisions or could not be solved in the one division because local management lacked the discretion or feared a precedent or principle might be involved, it would be taken up by the group officers or directly by the group secretary. In principle, the group officers or secretary never took up members' problems which could be solved by a division representative. However, since this only applied to rather minor matters, members and representatives often would expect the group secretary's help with division issues.

Some issues would be raised at the joint consultative committee, but many problems were solved outside formal meetings. The general rule seemed to be that union representatives never by-passed the group secretary and that he had direct access to all managers, but always involved the finance and administration director. The same applied the other way around. Very few days passed without the group secretary and the finance and administration director meeting or having contact over the telephone. Their bargaining

relationship based upon trust and respect enabled them to 'test the water' before one side formally approached the other. Another rule seemed to be that neither side expected to be able to move very far without the other side finding out. Consequently, management would disclose any information on plans that might have been relevant to the union, once the decision to go ahead with those plans had been taken.

Union strategy

The high degree of centralisation of the company both in terms of its commercial decision-making and industrial relations made it almost inevitable that the group officers played a central role. This was of course strengthened by the expectations of many of the union members who were not experienced trade unionists and often did not seem to expect to be involved in finding a solution for their own problems. The main activities of the group officers were to help develop a trade union input in the consultative and negotiating meetings by drafting proposals and agreements; discussing a reaction to management proposals and actions; comparing notes on experiences with reorganisation, staffing levels, workloads and technical changes; obtaining information from representatives and members about developments in particular divisions and sections of the company; discussing possible trade union initiatives in and outside the company and potential membership support.

In most cases the group officers based their claims on arguments of reasonableness, equity, just rewards for loyalty, and where possible, on procedural rights. Claims were well argued to convince management and members that they represented the members' interest better than any original management proposals. This process can be seen as an ideological struggle to convince the members that they had interests which were different from those of management, and that the basis of an independent trade union was to help them express those interests. Trade union responses to management strategies to lower labour cost and increase efficiency focussed upon management's overall commercial strategies as the reason for the mediocre performance of the company. The assumption was that since senior management did not want to be seen to ignore their employees' reasonable interests, they had to respond reasonably to these claims.

The group officers of the union started in the middle of 1979 to discuss safeguards against the introduction of new technology. They set up a sub-committee which included other union representatives but made little progress. The issue returned in 1980 inspired by a series of ASTMS reports and recommendations on new technology, suggesting a technology agreement with safeguards for jobs, job design and skills, and health and safety (see McKechnie 1981). Possibly as a partial response, in the summer of 1980, the company put forward a draft code of practice on VDUs. The group officers responded by asking the finance and administration division to hold that draft until the ASTMS code of practice on VDUs had been published later in 1980, so this could be

discussed simultaneously with the company's draft. At the same time the group set up a new sub-committee to monitor the use of micro-technology by the company. Like the previous sub-committee this one appeared to have led to no particular results, but it was involved in the informal process of passing drafts and comments between the company and union.

During the following eighteen months the VDU guidelines, or new technology agreement, were seldom mentioned in joint meetings or group meetings. However, in December 1981 guidelines for the introduction and use of VDUs were finally agreed. They only differed from the draft proposed by the company in the summer of 1980 in that some health and safety precautions were mentioned more explicitly. Subsequently, early in 1982, there was some confusion over whether the guidelines were optional, or whether local management were bound by them. Even at the level of the group officers, union representatives were unsure whether or not these guidelines constituted a 'new technology agreement'. On the first question the finance and administration director confirmed that where VDUs were introduced managers were bound by guidelines. However, by 1983, a majority of union representatives felt that the guidelines had little impact. One example, was the continuous operation of VDUs in some offices without the allowance of break periods as stated in the guidelines.

The question of whether the guidelines were a new technology agreement remained unsolved. The answer is probably that the other half of what could be expected in such an agreement had

become part of a redundancy and redeployment agreement. One conclusion which can be drawn from this example of the group officers in action is that they had come to accept the slow pace of change inside the company, which sometimes seemed like no change. Another conclusion, which will be elaborated later is that technical change and its relationship to organisational change had not been a major issue for the group officers.

In summary, the following can be said of the group officers. They played a central role in all group matters. They were the only body within the group which met frequently and even if division initiatives and grievances influenced the union's input into joint meetings, there would have been detailed prior discussion and formulation by the group officers. It was the company's high degree of centralisation of industrial relations which limited the autonomy and sphere of influence of division representatives. The group officers and in particular the group secretary had to balance aims that seemed to be incompatible. Centralised industrial relations increased their power and opportunities to influence and negotiate management plans. On the other hand, they wanted to increase union democracy in the sense of real membership involvement; also because any extension of collective bargaining or formulation of more detailed claims would depend upon membership agreement.

Nearly all division representatives would at times have discussed matters of health and safety with local management; just over half would at times deal with issues relating to staff levels; just under half of all division representatives would sometimes deal with job

evaluation, grading, working hours and holidays; less than a third would ever deal with issues relating to promotion or merit rating and even fewer with daily or weekly job allocation. Even though the majority of division representatives had more than a third of their members working on on-line computer systems, less than one third ever discussed the introduction of new technology with local management. The great majority of division representatives thought that the number of issues discussed with local management had increased between 1979 and 1984 and many thought management's attitude to division trade union representation had become more helpful. There was no indication that lack of discretion and authority on the part of local management was seen as a major reason for referring issues to the group officers.

Trade union activity in smaller divisions was little lower or higher than in larger constituencies; anymore than in divisions with a higher than average proportion of female workers was there more or less union activity. However, trade union activity between three divisions, materials and processing, finance and administration, and ferrous operations, and other divisions varied considerably. There were more representatives in higher positions in the former divisions who had a closer relationship with management and perhaps, therefore, more option to discuss a wider range of issues important to their members. Particularly, none of the representatives experienced management resistance to local trade union work or to involvement in the union group. Furthermore, in these three divisions there were proportionally more committed trade

unionists who saw local management's discretion in industrial relations increasing.

Pay, fringe benefits, pensions, hours of work and redundancy and redeployment were negotiated and on these issues the union clearly had direct influence. Job evaluation and to a lesser extent health and safety were jointly dealt with in consultative arrangements. Discipline and welfare matters were discussed often with the involvement of the group secretary but also on the joint consultative committee. The influence of the union was more limited here than on the previous issues.

Where the union had least influence was over the content of individual jobs and the allocation of tasks per day or week. This was the area which virtually no division representative discussed with management, let alone negotiated. One measure of influence was that any job above the lowest levels, that is, cleaners and cooks, would be advertised internally. The main problem with this form of job control appeared to be that most members preferred to avoid making an issue over it, even when local conditions were below standards agreed between the group officers and finance and administration division. Beyond these matters the frontier of control became blurred because the actual influence exerted was constrained by members' limited definition of collective issues and how far the trade union should become involved.

The agendas and minutes of the joint consultative committee and those of the group officers' meetings make it clear that there were

very few changes senior management would make without at least informing the union. For example, departmental reorganisation, the integration of two divisions' secretarial departments, or the centralisation of routine administration; and planned changes in clerical procedures. On these types of issues the group officers or at least the group secretary would be informed before implementation. If changes were made before the union was informed, and the union found out, which was normally the case, lower management was often blamed by the company and the change frozen or reversed.

Therefore, the group officers and certainly the group secretary were in a position to comment upon most changes in the company before they took place. Moreover, senior management was sufficiently aware of the union to listen to these comments. Perhaps because of the members' view of the role of a trade union the nature and direction of these conclusions appear to be narrow. It seldom occurred that the union took an initiative which went beyond responding to industrial relations matters. Where it happened, as in 1981, when the group officers proposed to management a joint review of office organisation and staffing levels, it appeared relatively easy for the company to ignore such an initiative. These points are borne in mind when comparing case studies in the following chapter.

Conclusions

This chapter has outlined the nature of the establishments covered in the case studies and considered the pattern of workplace trade union organisation. It was found that patterns of union organisational development and the role which the unions played were influenced by key factors which have been highlighted in previous chapters. In concluding this chapter it is useful to summarise the main themes. Part III of this study will then be concerned with the more detailed analysis of these themes.

At establishment level the greatest development was found in telecommunications and metals technology. Both had a high union membership; both had a substantial number of representatives and senior representatives; both had, in practice, at least one full-time representative and in both cases union representatives met together regularly. In telecommunications there were a number of unions, but they also co-ordinated their action. In metals technology, the fact that there was only one union representing workers meant that inter-union problems did not arise, while unity was facilitated by the fact that the majority of the workforce were technicians. In these two cases the same pattern was found as in the 1980 survey: well-developed organisations play a greater role in collective bargaining.

In local government the degree of union development was also relatively high. However, certain elements of development were lacking and this was particularly important given the scale of the

authority. Firstly, the branch secretary was not just responsible for the headquarters but for all authority offices and other sites. While, in a more strongly organised union, this might well be a source of strength, it could be seen as a source of weakness in this instance for it meant that no-one was co-ordinating union activity. Co-ordination only occurred at a lower level where there were representatives who held meetings of representatives from particular offices. At office and headquarter level there was no on-going structure of co-ordination except through the branch secretary. Accordingly, the organisation of the union imposed serious limitations upon the extent to which the actions of representatives could be co-ordinated. This was particularly important given the pattern of work. For while there were several thousand workers at the headquarters, workers and representatives were distributed across a large number of relatively isolated offices, some of which were miles apart. In other words, representatives were unlikely to meet each other in the normal course of working. They, therefore, needed considerable institutional support. The departmental representative meetings did not appear to be sufficiently regular or broad-ranging to provide the sort of lead and initiative which was necessary if isolated representatives were to play a more active role.

An important reason for this was, of course, the fact that at higher levels the range of bargaining differed from that at local level. Relatedly, the sectional interests of different groups were given institutional recognition in the representative organisation whereas there was no body which drew those interests together. In a

number of key respects, therefore, single-union development was limited in local government, particularly given the size of the authority and the dispersion of the labour force. But it was even less developed in multi-union terms. Different unions and occupational groups negotiated separately. More than this, the representatives from the different unions did not come together to co-ordinate policies or demands. The pattern of union organisation, both within NALGO and more generally, therefore, reflected rather than resolved differences of interest. The extent to which a co-ordinated policy could be pursued was, therefore, very limited and this was reflected in the limited range and degree of union influence.

In textiles, and even more so in motor parts, much of what has been said stresses the basic weakness of union organisation at establishment level. In the typical office there were simply too few representatives, too little involved in union affairs, to be able to co-ordinate their activities and provide each other with support. Even where there were greater concentrations of representatives positions often remained unfilled while meetings were relatively infrequent. In short, at establishment level, union organisation was very undeveloped. However, this was compensated to a degree by the strength of the unions at company level. It has been seen that in many respects the unions at this level were fairly developed.

The lack of establishment level development in motor parts and textiles, then, was to some extent compensated for by a degree of

development at company level. Here full-time local officials were supported by a committee which met prior to negotiations. In many respects the significance of these central organisations was much greater in motor parts and textiles than in any of the other case studies because of the extremely high degree of centralisation within management. Only at the central level, for example, was there a personnel function which, as has been seen, monitored local industrial relations very closely. More generally, local level management had very limited discretion in the areas in which this study is interested.

It was seen that one key feature which influenced the role which the union played was the level or levels at which bargaining occurred and the degree of integration between different levels of union organisation. The telecommunications case study showed the greatest degree of joint-level bargaining: issues were discussed in some detail both at national and local level. Moreover, the structure of union organisation meant that these different levels of bargaining fed off each other. At local level representatives bargained within the framework developed centrally; the integration of the different levels of bargaining was achieved through a variety of institutional means which ensured that there were close relationships between the organisation leadership and the average representative. This meant not only that the former were able to develop a clear picture of the general interests of the membership but also that representatives operated within the context of wider union policy.

In metals technology also there was company and departmental bargaining, again with a fairly high degree of co-ordination between the different levels. The reason why the level was less than that found in telecommunications is because it was confined to the establishment. This limited both the number of levels at which bargaining could occur and its significance. In local government, bargaining also occurred at national and local level. Hence, there was a considerable amount of discussion at these levels, but its significance and scope was limited by the relative dearth of bargaining at local level. This meant, for example, that the degree of union involvement in work organisation matters was limited. At the local level the union lacked detailed knowledge because representatives were not closely involved and generally lacked bargaining awareness. This limited the extent to which the wider union was able to create a framework within which representatives could act locally. Certainly moves in this direction were made, but their significance appears to have been limited. In other words, the limitations found in local government were in some senses the reverse of those found in metals technology.

Finally, in textiles and, to a lesser extent, motor parts, there was a certain amount of company and local level bargaining; but in these instances it has been seen that company level bargaining did not provide a framework within which local bargaining occurred over so many issues. Certainly the two were related: for example, representatives might query job descriptions which were developed within the context of the companies' job grading systems. But they did not negotiate over work organisation within a similar framework.

Such issues were scarcely dealt with at higher levels and were left to the individual representative. Again, this pattern was related to the lack of co-ordination of the representative bodies.

The existing pattern of union bargaining activity, however, reflects the historical developments of industrial relations; the past strategies of actors are reflected in current institutional and organisational arrangements. What the union has been able to achieve in the past therefore affects the current attitudes of members. Similarly, of course, member attitudes have affected the scope of trade union activity. This theme is returned to below. But for the moment it is worth stressing the importance of management strategy for the role which the union plays and the nature of member attitudes.

Some writers suggest that the pattern of work organisation is consciously and conspiratorially designed by management to 'divide and rule' the workforce (for example, Thompson and Bannon 1985). Certainly management designs work organisation with particular ends in mind, but the case studies provide little support for the view that control conspiracies play a very significant role. Nevertheless, the structure of work organisation does shape worker views, as has been seen. But in addition, employers adopt other strategies which affect the role of the union. Two types of strategy are particularly worthy of note in the present context. The first is the extent to which management is prepared to permit the unions to 'intrude' into particular areas. Certainly, in all of the cases, such intrusion is limited in absolute terms; the unions

did not directly affect the overall pattern of management strategy. However, the unions did play some role in affecting work organisation and the more general pattern of industrial relations. In none of the employing organisations had there been major confrontations between management and unions over areas of union influence. In large part management appear to have conceded union influence where the unions, over a period of time, had sought it. In other areas management had, much more on their own initiative, begun to consult the unions, or at least disclose information to them, on a wider range of issues. In other words, managements were beginning to foster a wider perspective on the part of the unions in an attempt to win their support for management action and to influence the union's bargaining stance. But the extent to which this had happened also appears to be related to the strength of union organisation: hence, such disclosure was least in motor parts.

The second strategy of significance for the role of the union was the extent to which management tried to appeal directly to workers. This was most clearly the case again in the motor parts company in the form of personal communications from management to staff. But in textiles, and to a lesser extent in local government, such 'paternalistic' strategies were also of relevance. However, in metals technology they had become less important as the role of the union had increased. In telecommunications this did not appear to have happened to anywhere near the same degree. The continuation of paternalism therefore appears to act as a constraint upon the role which the union plays. In telecommunications and metals technology the management had experimented with new styles of

individualism, in the form of quality circles and briefing groups. But given the well-developed organisation of the union, these techniques do not appear to have adversely affected the role which the union played nor the collective orientation of union members.

There are some signs, however, that the changes associated with technical innovation were affecting union organisation. It should be stressed that these were relatively minor so that, when everything is taken into account, it would be true to say that new technology had little direct effect upon union organisation, except possibly in the case of the motor parts company. However, the significance of technical change lay in its association with a wide range of other changes which raised issues for the unions they had never before confronted or dealt with. These technical changes had effects upon the unions through the changes in work organisation which occurred.

In the first place, particularly in telecommunications and to a lesser degree in metals technology, new technology developed new special interests amongst union members. In telecommunications there were signs that those working on the new equipment were developing an awareness of their own potential and distinctive skills. In this instance, however, the union attempted to constrain the expression of such sectional interests where they endangered the unity of the membership and to ensure that they had no special institutional means which would facilitate their pursuit. In metals technology the more flexible pattern of work organisation made the work situation more similar to that found in local government, with

close informal interaction between workers and supervision. At the same time, in the latter case, many workers were relatively isolated from the authority's headquarters. This meant that workers were more likely to take up problems directly with management, with the consequence that the representatives played less of a role in work organisation issues. Furthermore, the small size of the labour force in textiles meant that all workers had the right to be involved in consultative meetings, whereas in the larger motor parts establishment such consultation involved only the representatives.

In sum, the case study findings have confirmed a number of key features affecting workplace unionism which were outlined in previous chapters. The first of these concerns union organisation and the structure of collective bargaining. The second focusses upon the industrial relations strategies pursued by management and the impact of market forces. The third relates to technical change and the nature of work. The following chapter provides a more detailed analysis of these themes by assessing the effect of structural and occupational factors upon union organisation. In doing so the interpretations shed light upon an explanatory framework for the character of non-manual workplace trade unionism.

Part III Interpretations and Conclusions

7 Interpretations

Part III of this study is concerned with the three key features affecting workplace unionism outlined in Part I and confirmed in the case studies: collective bargaining arrangements, management and technical change. This chapter provides a more detailed account of these particular features and permits a consideration of their significance for the character of trade unions in the workplace. The concluding chapter then relates these findings to various approaches to workplace industrial relations outlined in Part I and contributes to debates on non-manual union character.

The first section in this chapter identifies the variety within the structure of collective bargaining by the levels and the scope of bargaining. Firstly, the levels of bargaining define the forms of power within the trade unions; the main centre of power is on that organisational level which negotiates. If the bargaining is decentralised to the workplace level, this reinforces the independence of workplace organisations. Secondly, where the scope of bargaining at workplace level is wide there is a high degree of union organisational development.

The second section confirms one of the constant themes running through recent research: that management is influential in the development and character of workplace organisations. There are three important ways in which management influences workplace unionism. The first of these is bargaining and consultation: which

issues may be bargained over at local level and the effect changes in the scope of local bargaining have upon the workplace organisation. The second is management attitudes and particularly the encouragement or opposition given to workplace representation. Thirdly, there is management structure which is illustrated here by the contrast between the public and private sectors.

In the third section the interpretations of bargaining processes and practices are placed in the context of the effects of technical change upon the nature of work and the unions. Because workplaces were being confronted with technical and work organisational change, in all the cases trade union representatives were attempting to bargain over the implementation of work and work organisation changes planned by management. The issues discussed in the first two sections are therefore likely to be important in understanding how new technology affects the nature of work and the unions. Firstly, the analysis relates the nature of technical change introduced in the case studies to the effects upon different groups who stood to gain or lose from change. The evidence reveals that ambiguous and contradictory effects of technical change can be seen in the simultaneous upgrading and downgrading of skills and working conditions and lends support to the view that new technology may have the effect of further polarising and separating different groups within labour markets. Secondly, this section illustrates that a weakening of trade union power caused by technical and work organisational change does not automatically or necessarily result in the demise of workplace trade unionism. But unions at workplace

level were found to have no coherent strategy towards technical change and work reorganisation and simply responded to management proposals in terms of the specific contingencies of the local situation.

Union Organisation and the Structure of Bargaining

Whether the issue bargained about was an individual or a collective one, in telecommunications, motor parts and local government a national procedure agreement formed the framework within which local negotiations took place. The process normally entailed workplace representatives and local management trying to settle the issue internally. Failing a domestic settlement, a meeting with full-time union officials and employer representatives would be convened. Workplace representatives in telecommunications and local government, unlike those in motor parts, were not involved in pay negotiations. There was, however, considerable scope for local bargaining in those sectors over the implementation of national agreements. The company agreements in both the textiles and metals technology case studies were broadly similar, containing provisions for either side to meet for negotiation and consultation on, for example, pay, conditions of service and proposals affecting efficiency.

In all three unions with national agreements senior representatives did most of the local bargaining. As already noted, workplace representatives bargained 'informally' with the local departmental

supervisor or manager over many issues. Only when these issues could not be resolved at this level did the negotiating committees of each union become involved. The motor parts union, APEX, because it had joint negotiating rights with the manual union, would participate in bargaining on issues, for example, job evaluation, which affected all workers irrespective of union membership. In such circumstances one staff representative, almost inevitably the senior representative, and two manual union representatives would constitute the negotiating committee. But where there was a collective issue which related to only one of the unions, or an individual grievance was taken up, then APEX would be represented by the senior representative and on occasions the local full-time official, along with the individual concerned.

Within telecommunications and the local authority, the majority of issues affected only a particular group of staff and the workplace representatives of each group negotiated for their members. Where the problem was an individual one, the representatives would be accompanied by the worker concerned. The outcome of such arrangements meant that in telecommunications and local government the branch secretaries played more of a full-time official's role, inasmuch as they acted as a link between the various negotiating groups offering advice and assistance whenever and wherever they could. Thus, to some extent, the branch secretaries in these two studies reinforced the independence of various groups. In motor parts, on the other hand, the experience and expertise of the senior representative ensured that issues were seldom taken up by a

negotiating committee. Moreover, the issues were resolved before the full-time official was brought in. If an issue could not be resolved through the formal channels of procedure some discussions 'behind the scenes' often produced the desired results.

The overall impression gained from the three unions with national agreements suggests that non-manual workplace representatives are very much involved in local bargaining. The picture which emerges from the telecommunications, motor parts and local government case studies parallels to a large extent that found by previous research into manual shop stewards and outlined in Part I. It is that where agreements allow bargaining to occur at the workplace level, non-manual workplace representatives play a central role in local negotiations and can develop a considerable degree of self-reliance in their dealings with management. Was this also the case of the workplace representatives in metals technology and textiles ?

Because the metals technology centre was a single site company, there was no clear distinction, as there was in the other four case studies, between the workplace and external stages of procedure. The full-time official in the four unions would be called in at the last stage, but in the case of metals technology it was the penultimate stage. An outside individual brought in at that stage did represent the end of local attempts to resolve the problem, but the procedure was not external to the workplace. The metals technology union also differed from the other unions in that a senior representative held a company position but worked a majority

of his time on industrial relations and trade union activities. In three of the other unions, in telecommunications, local government and motor parts, there were full-time workplace representatives, while in textiles the senior workplace negotiator spent little time on union business.

There were three main consequences for workplace bargaining at the metals technology centre and also in telecommunications, local government and motor parts, compared with textiles. Firstly, informal contacts between the senior representatives and the industrial relations managers were considerable, and 'strong bargaining relationships' developed between senior representatives and management. In negotiations both sides were aware of each other's relative strengths and weaknesses. Secondly, the experience and expertise in negotiations very often ensured that issues did not reach a stage where a full-time official was contacted. Clearly, these representatives had sufficient competence and a strong enough relationship with management to settle issues which, for whatever reason, would have otherwise remained unresolved in the domestic procedure. Thirdly, the senior representatives, with the exception of textiles, acted very much as filters in processing problems. They were full-time (or virtually so in metals technology), had their own offices and could be easily contacted. Thus problems could be dealt with quickly, sometimes needing only a telephone call to the industrial relations manager. Therefore, many of the smaller issues were settled informally without recourse to formal procedures.

This did not happen in textiles. Instead, there was a tendency for groups to deal with their own problems rather than entrust them to the senior representative. The other representatives normally sought the senior representative's advice on individual cases. Where an issue affected a whole group, the senior representative would often seek the advice, and frequently the active assistance, of her local full-time official. Moreover, the textiles union bargained jointly with a manual union, as the non-manual union did in motor parts, on common issues such as job evaluation and job security. On such issues, each union would normally be represented by its senior workplace representative and joined by a full-time official who represented both groups.

However, while in four of the five case studies senior representatives had built up a high degree of competence in dealing with management, it would be a mistake to infer that the senior representatives bargained in isolation from other representatives. With the exception of motor parts, none of the unions sent only their most senior representative into negotiations with management. Naturally, the senior representatives were involved in all negotiations which were processed through procedures. But on collective issues, such as pay in the case of metals technology, they were very much part of a negotiating team. In the case of an individual claim, the senior representatives would be accompanied by the individual concerned and a local representative.

In motor parts, the senior representative tended to be involved in all grievances no matter how minor. To some degree this was because the other workplace representatives were relatively inexperienced in handling such issues and there was a tendency for them to refer matters automatically to the senior representative. But it also corresponded very much with his own view of his role, which he portrayed as being one of a leader, not necessarily reflecting the membership's wishes. This perception was reinforced by the other representatives, who were quite content for the senior representative to retain such authority. Because he was a full-time representative and they were not, it seemed as if they almost expected it.

The overall pattern in four of the five case studies, then, was for senior representatives to do most of the workplace bargaining. The full-time officials would only be brought in at the appropriate stages of procedure or contacted for advice. Only in textiles was the senior representative's reliance upon the full-time official more than minimal. So far as the senior representative in motor parts was concerned this was probably a reflection of his own capabilities and his desire to be self-reliant. While in the case of telecommunications, local government and metals technology, a high degree of union development and bargaining at a variety of levels, made the intervention of full-time officials unnecessary on most occasions.

The discussion now turns to the scope of issues negotiated at workplace level. Whilst pay was a very important issue affecting all the unions, as already noted, it was only in metals technology and textiles that pay bargaining occurred at workplace level. Moreover, in the 1980s, the economic recession and its impact upon the companies had limited such negotiations to a virtual acceptance of the employers' offer.

Within metals technology, each grade had a separate pay claim but, in practice, they negotiated two settlements; one for technical and another for administrators and other staff. But collective agreements permitted negotiations on pay-related issues, such as overtime and shift basis allowances, in addition to an 'on call' allowance for computer staff. This reflected the grade structuring since, in successive agreements concluded between ASTMS and the company, the union negotiated a number of special payments based upon a comparison with other groups of technical staff. Senior representatives had argued that during the late 1970s differentials with other company staff had been eroded. Consequently, the special payments aimed to restore the former position of ASTMS technical staff.

In textiles, the non-manual union negotiated on pay-related issues jointly with the manual union. Agreements signed throughout the 1970s and early 1980s offered percentage increases applying to all grades on a five grade structure. But in 1981 both the ACTSS and the manual union negotiated some modifications to the progression

points within each grade: that is, all grades on the minimum and six months progression point were moved *en bloc* to the twelve month point.

Remuneration, of course, was not the only issue with which the unions concerned themselves. Conditions of employment, for example, working conditions, holiday entitlements, redeployment and staffing levels also figured prominently in workplace bargaining even if, in telecommunications and local government, this involved mainly administering agreements made at national level. Again in motor parts and textiles, these issues were usually dealt with on a joint union basis. For metals technology, however, separate workplace agreements for substantive issues were concluded. Unlike in motor parts and textiles, the union did not have to negotiate jointly for, say, holiday entitlements and procedurally it was quite possible for one group of workers to negotiate additional entitlements over and above the entitlement for the other workers.

These examples illustrate that the five unions were continually trying to extend the areas in which they were recognised for bargaining purposes. However, as the following section will show, management, in the case of motor parts, had become less supportive of trade unions in a number of respects. Moreover, this evidence from the case studies confirms what has already been found in manual unions, namely that the scope of bargaining at workplace level is very wide, covering hours, other conditions of work and benefits. It shows that like their counterparts in manual unions,

non-manual workers are as much concerned about employment conditions as determining what the annual pay increase will be; which, in turn, means issues such as staffing levels and job security. The most factors important in explaining this pattern were the number of levels at which bargaining occurred, and the role of union organisation, both internally at the workplace and in relation to the wider union.

Implicit in the above is the assumption that there is a relationship between broader union structure and the pattern of bargaining. Across the case studies the range of bargaining was highest in unions dealing with a single employer or industry, and much less in multi-industry unions. The same pattern was true for union policies. Similar variations emerge in respect of the bargaining over, and union initiatives about, strategic issues such as investment and choice of equipment. On the other hand, issues related to the protection of an occupation (especially training) received more attention in bargaining by the single occupation unions. All of which supports the picture depicted in the 1980 survey.

Traditions of negotiation in the industry or sector can also influence bargaining activity, along with the more general industrial relations strategies pursued by management. Market forces may also have an impact upon both management policy and union activity. Additionally, when the question of new technology is considered, it might also be expected that the nature of the technical change

itself will influence the pattern of bargaining. However, one of the problems in the case studies was that it was often difficult to trace through in very great detail why and how particular decisions were made, for they were clearly not matters of contention. Some reasons for this, in terms of industrial relations and management strategy, are considered more fully in the following section.

Management Industrial Relations Strategies

As discussed in Part I, in recent years a number of commentators have argued that the principal reason why management reconsiders its approach towards the labour force and unions is the need to create flexible labour to meet the dynamic conditions of competitive markets. For some writers, this desire for control and cost reduction is seen to motivate a long-term trend towards the degradation of existing jobs. The main features of this strategy are the fragmentation of labour into narrowly constituted jobs, with deskilling and a use of direct control methods either through close supervision or structuring by technology. This theme is analysed in this section.

According to Atkinson (1985), managements adopting the 'flexible firm' approach are looking for three kinds of flexibility: numerical to adjust the number of workers employed to meet fluctuations in the level of demand, functional so that tasks performed by workers can be adjusted to meet changing business demands and financial to encourage and support the numerical and functional flexibility.

Managers in the case studies were seeking both numerical and functional flexibility, but they were using different techniques to achieve the same ends from different groups of workers. The skills and occupations which employing organisations defined as primary skills showed the main criteria to be job content and the centrality of the activity in which workers were engaged. The more discretionary the elements in the work and the more specific the skills involved to the needs of the enterprise, then the more likely it was that the job would appear in the primary group. Conversely, low discretion work in support activities was more likely to be carried out by the secondary groups.

The flexible firm ?

The pattern varied between the case studies and the different types of labour. In telecommunications, for example, there had been a much more widespread use of overtime. In metals technology, there was more shiftworking by technical groups. In these cases management had sought to adjust their labour input through primary labour. The most marked increases in part-time labour were amongst clerical staff in motor parts and textiles, although in the latter study casual labour was also becoming commonly used in non-manual areas of work. In local government there had generally been little change in the types of non-manual labour used, but for manual workers there had been increases in sub-contracting of both work and labour.

In other words, managers generally in the telecommunications and metals technology case studies had increased non-manual labour input through greater or more intensive use of the primary labour force rather than resorting to secondary labour. In contrast, management in motor parts and textiles had been more prepared to employ secondary non-manual and manual labour. In these two cases it was managerial strategy to reduce costs and the bargaining power of the unions directly by making primary sector workers redundant and replacing them, or by shifting the same workers from primary to secondary status. If there was a temporary upsurge of demand, then temporary labour was used to fill it.

While managers were achieving greater flexibility and thereby reducing union bargaining power in these ways, there were clear constraints upon such strategies. Firstly, while resort to secondary labour was in order to maximise, or to at least increase, flexibility, reduction in demand could be met by shifting work away from the secondary sector into the primary, unionised, sector. Secondly, only particular types of work could be sub-contracted. It had to be possible to sub-divide the production process into clearly defined parts with rather loose quality standards. Those activities which could most easily be contracted out were peripheral, required little skill, and were likely to be elements of the production process where union power was in any case limited. Indeed, a trade union whose primary membership is in more central areas may not be too sorry to see such weak groups removed from their bargaining area since the net effect may be to strengthen the union.

Moreover, resort to sub-contractors was sometimes seen as a second-best option, for example, for the maintenance of new equipment in the textile company. Costs rose, as in the case when it took several hours, during which production was lost, before the sub-contractor arrived. Also, in motor parts and textiles an increased use of secondary labour was found among the lower grades of the workforce. Administrative and technical workers, however, were able to check this sort of strategy on the part of management. Thus it is important to recognise that the scale of resort to secondary labour varies not only between employing organisations but among different groups within organisations. Therefore, greater use of so-called secondary labour will have variable implications for unions and their members.

A second related approach which has been widely discussed in the last few years concerns attempts by managers to by-pass trade unions by fostering a direct relationship between the worker and management. It is claimed that this approach improves productivity and efficiency directly by permitting workers to take greater initiative, and indirectly, by increasing the legitimacy of management and managerial action in the eyes of the workforce. In the late 1970s, two forms of this approach were widely introduced among manual workforces. Firstly, some companies were experimenting with job enrichment or enlargement and with semi-autonomous workgroups. Secondly, many more companies began to introduce joint consultative committees, although generally these were union-based. More recently, employers have shown greater

interest in techniques for 'involvement' rather than 'participation', especially through briefing groups and quality circles.

In the case studies union-based systems of consultation were the most widely used of the participative techniques. And they had been more widely introduced in the previous five years, whereas non-union based consultation continued to be rare. In only one study, motor parts, had it been more widely introduced in the previous five years.

Of the more direct participative techniques, autonomous workgroups were the least used except in telecommunications where direct participative techniques were most commonly found and had seen the greatest increase over the previous five years. However, in local government, the other public sector study, the adoption of participative techniques was very limited. In the private sector, participative techniques were most common in metals technology where quality circles were relatively popular among the technical groups, whose skill levels tended to be higher, while briefing groups were used more for clerical and administrative staff. Briefing groups were also used among clerical and administrative workers in the motor parts and textiles case studies.

The techniques used demonstrated two important common features. Firstly, in telecommunications and among technical groups in metals technology, where greater reliance had been placed upon participative techniques, management were seeking both to develop

and retain the skills and competencies which were specific and could not be easily bought-in. Secondly, among clerical workers in motor parts and textiles, where briefing groups were used, management were employing secondary groups to secure numerical flexibility. In doing this management were insulating and protecting the primary group. Union representatives could thus exploit the strengths of secure key groups, but they were unable to extend support to the secondary groups. The organisational strength of primary workers seemed to set some limits to the flexibility sought by management. In telecommunications and metals technology, the patterns of union organisation and the firm-specific nature of the work resulted in participative techniques doing little to weaken the role of the unions (cf. Batstone 1984).

Some writers have suggested that such increased consultation with both unions and workers may be a moderate form of 'union by-passing' (for example, Sisson 1984). This applied in part to the case studies. Indeed, 'by-passing' may be an accurate description in the case of motor parts and to a lesser extent textiles, but not in the case of worker involvement techniques in telecommunications and metals technology. There, consultation techniques had the effect of increasing the centrality of the union in workers' eyes and were used as a means to put even greater pressure upon the employer. Moreover, union by-passing may be taken to mean that issues which were formally negotiated are now simply matters for consultation. But in telecommunications and metals technology, issues for consultation served to expand the range of union-management

deliberations rather than intrude upon previously jointly-negotiated matters (see also Marchington and Armstrong 1986).

It is important to consider the claim that changes in working practices have been introduced on a large scale in companies facing competitive pressures; an illustration of a decline in union influence (for example, Lane 1982; Edmonds 1984). The evidence from the case studies was that in motor parts and textiles management had used the worsened economic climate as a justification for a tougher managerial style. In motor parts, it was apparent that the workplace union was in no position to resist any changes to work organisation. This case certainly demonstrated that direct worker involvement was taking the place of moribund bargaining practices.

In textiles, both management and union representatives were in no doubt about the fiercely competitive environment within which the company was operating, although it had managed to improve its market share over the previous two years. Management had sought to maintain good relations with the non-manual and manual unions, and there is no doubt that the consultative operations had encouraged the unions to co-operate in the process of change. Change could not have occurred in the way that it did if management had not been committed to maintaining industrial relations through the recognised trade unions.

In telecommunications and metals technology, management were going to considerable lengths to point out the need for co-operation, commitment and open management. In both studies similar kinds of consultation were adopted and management and union representatives were agreed upon keeping consultation and negotiation separate. Both sides considered that co-operation would be more fruitful than confrontation. (Similar results were found by Marchington and Armstrong 1986 in their research into joint consultation).

Thus central to the impact of the recession upon the workplace unions was the way in which the employing organisation itself fared. Where the employers faced market problems the workplace organisations were forced into a trade-off between jobs and working practices. Therefore the union's bargaining position in motor parts was seriously weakened. It was forced to concede changes in working practices in exchange for continued employment but in the course of doing so it was also required to accept job loss. Although in a similar market situation, management in textiles wished to maintain the compliance of workers and the co-operation of the union and it was therefore necessary for them to make concessions. That is, changes in working practices were less than technically optimal from the employer's point of view.

In addition, there were the telecommunications and metals technology situations where proposed changes had, and will continue to have, less effect upon union power and influence. The balance of advantage for the employers was only temporary and once the risk of

job loss had receded, then the power of the unions returned. For the ultimate basis of union power within telecommunications and metals technology was not the size of the workplaces but their ability to stop production required by the employers.

The general conclusion from the evidence in the case studies is that serious weakening of non-manual trade unions through 'by-passing' because of the recession is less common than may be supposed from the arguments deployed elsewhere for manual unions. A co-operative, consultative style was a characteristic feature of the workplaces studied. Unlike 'confrontation', 'co-operation' requires a preparedness for open consideration with management of the implications of possible changes. To achieve this, separating negotiating procedures from those for consultation seems appropriate. The evidence from the studies shows that for well-developed non-manual workplace organisations this co-operative approach can be successfully used as a vehicle for increased influence.

It has been recognised that managements have sought to exert control over manual workers' pay in such a way as to facilitate management's production goals (Purcell and Sisson 1983; Sisson and Brown 1983). But if pay is the primary means of control at the disposal of an employer, then the precise type of payment system is important. For example, individual piecework shifts a great deal of control of work effort to the individual worker. At the other extreme, the payment system can be used as a means of fostering

worker identification with the employer. This is the rationale underlying the use of establishment or company-wide bonuses. To a lesser degree such a strategy may also inform group-based incentive schemes. But while individual piecework may show little relationship between effort and rewards, with bonuses the worker's income depends upon the performance of the unit as a whole. The aim, therefore, is to encourage co-operation and a realisation on the part of workers that their future is bound up with that of the employing unit. While still an incentive, its rationale is therefore dramatically different from that of the piecework payment.

Thus these different forms of incentive indicate quite different strategies on the part of management. The wide variety of British payment systems, reflecting the *ad hoc* reaction of employers to different, short-term pressures, including incomes policies (see, for example, White 1981), may be broadly divided between those relating, on the one hand, to manual workers, and on the other, to non-manual staff. The significant trend for manual workers has been away from individual to group or plant-wide schemes.

> *The introduction of measured daywork, of group or plant bonus schemes such as value added, the modification of payment by results schemes where time is separated from price with the use of centrally-negotiated rates for converting times into payment - all these had the effect of placing the determination of actual earnings firmly in the hands of central negotiators (Purcell and Sisson 1983:105).*

For non-manual staff in the private sector case studies, payment systems varied between administrators with fixed range salary bands with discretionary progression tied closely to performance appraisal

systems, and clerical and technical staff also with fixed range salary bands but with very limited progression beyond. Within the public sector studies the approach was for incremental scales for all staff, through which the individual moved by regular and specified steps. In these cases it was the range in the scale which determined the rate for the particular job.

Individual incentives were almost totally absent from the case studies. Only in the marketing department in motor parts were they common. These incentives had been introduced in this department in the previous five years. A similar picture was found in the case of group incentive schemes, although their existence varied considerably within and between the case studies. In the public sector they were completely absent, but were relatively common in motor parts and textiles, particularly among the technical maintenance groups. Company or establishment bonuses were more common than the other two types of payment systems, although not in the public sector studies. They were common to motor parts, textiles and metals technology among all the non-manual occupational groups investigated. These types of bonuses were also the area of greatest change in payment systems over the previous five years, having become more common particularly in motor parts and textiles.

Closely related to these changing systems of pay was the use of techniques designed to measure work and responsibilities. As noted in Chapter 2, it has been widely argued that the use of so-called scientific management techniques is an important method of

management control over labour. In the case studies job evaluation was the technique most frequently used. Work study was also used in motor parts and textiles among technical maintenance workers. The main reason why payment systems were changing and scientific management techniques being developed was the opportunities that technical change was creating for employing organisations. Thus the effectiveness of existing forms of work organisation was being called into question. The impact of technical change upon work and workplace trade unionism will be discussed in the following section. Here the discussion is focussed upon the effects of management's increasing use of scientific management techniques as a method of influencing pay and work.

Job evaluation was in general use throughout the case studies for clerical and administrative workers. As a technique it was attractive to managers and union representatives in local government, textiles and metals technology because it helped to overcome sources of dispute by providing a framework within which jobs could be examined according to agreed criteria and by enabling jobs to be placed in an acceptable rank order for which pay scales could then be determined. Motor parts had separate job evaluation schemes for manual, clerical, technical and administrative workers. These job evaluation schemes had to be re-examined because of the rate and extent of the introduction of new technology, together with its detailed effects upon work organisation, job redesign and job content.

For technical maintenance workers in motor parts and textiles, the use of work study techniques legitimised management decision-making and reduced the scope for collective bargaining. Unlike the rate-fixing which had been prevalent in both companies in the 1970s, and which had invited challenge from individuals and their representatives, the systematic use of work study techniques by specialist industrial engineers brought about a significant change. This was that the standards set tended to be more consistent between jobs and over time. Clearly a major aim of the techniques was to make sure that negotiations did not take place at the point of production where management is at its most vulnerable (see Purcell and Sisson 1983:102-108).

Thus, in these cases, the need to respond to market pressures and to new technology led to management's demand for a greater flexibility than existed in their payment systems in order to cope with change which was occurring quickly and which differed in the nature of its impact. Flexibility was needed by management in particular to cope with new forms of work organisation which were less static than previous structures and included multi-skilling and new roles.

Three reasons can be suggested for the introduction over the previous five years of group-sharing and establishment or company-wide incentive schemes, particularly in motor parts and textiles, but also in metals technology. Firstly, greater use of computers in process control was reducing the relevance of work-measured incentive schemes and alternative methods of recognising

performance were being sought. Secondly, financial participation schemes were logical supports for the changing styles of management-worker relationships. Thirdly, stemming from both these trends and in particular from the urge to remain competitive, attention was being focussed to a much greater extent upon overall company performance and such financial participation schemes were designed to support this. In the public sector studies, telecommunications and local government, incremental scales which implicitly link increased pay with the increased experience that comes with length of service, may be less able to respond to the need to reward flexible work or general increases in the discretionary element in job content. Future trends may, therefore, be towards merit salary structures unless flexibility can be introduced in the way in which incremental scales are applied.

However, there was a noticeable difference between management's expectations of such schemes in, on the one hand, motor parts, and on the other, textiles and metals technology. In motor parts, changes in the pay system were seen as an important instrument of management policy not only to increase competitiveness and control unit labour costs, but also as part of management's lack of commitment to bargaining with the trade union. In textiles and motor parts, pay structures were also a key factor influencing management and unions. However, management policy in these cases was that, for pay structures to be a positive rather than a negative influence, it was crucially important to get as much agreement as possible with the union about their aims and to reduce the amount

of misunderstanding which tended to surround them. To achieve this, increased trade union involvement in both the initial shaping of the payment structure and in devising its objectives was sought and obtained. This did, of course, have implications for the ways in which managements and the unions organised themselves within the companies to deal with pay matters. The aim was that, by taking this path, potential conflict and misunderstanding would be identified at source and trade union commitment to the system realised. At a time of rapid change and a desperate scramble for increased competitiveness, management in both companies were successful in gaining the unions' co-operation rather than creating conflict.

It may be useful at this point to recap briefly the main findings so far. Managerial strategies which influence workplace unionism can be divided into four main kinds: reductions in employment, attempts to change working practices, attempts to involve representatives, workers or both more fully, and endeavours to adopt a firmer approach towards workers and their unions or to reduce the bargaining role of the unions. Management adopted a variety of techniques in the case studies. In some cases, especially in motor parts and to a lesser extent in textiles, reductions in staffing levels, changes in working practices and attempts to increase worker and union involvement were found. These strategies had met with success and it would be absurd to argue that in these cases the workplace organisations had not experienced a reduction in their impact within the companies.

However, the evidence from the case studies also showed that, while management in motor parts was adopting a tougher approach towards the labour force and the unions, this strategy was not on a wide and coherent scale of the kind suggested by a number of commentators on manual trade unionism. Significant in this finding is that perspectives on such industrial relations strategic-planning can be criticised for failing to recognise the *ad hoc* character of practical decision-making (see also Rose and Jones 1985). Moreover, the degree of development of union organisation had remained remarkably stable over the previous five years. Furthermore, changes in the labour market had constrained bargaining only to a limited extent.

Management structure and industrial relations strategies

One other way in which management influences the character of workplace unionism, and which is clearly very relevant to an explanation of variations in management's approach towards the unions, is through the pattern of ownership. The textile company was characterised very much by the private sector situation outlined in Chapter 3. The company operated in a very competitive market where products were continually being updated and modified in order to stimulate demand. In a volatile market where small changes in product design took place very frequently, survival depended upon responding quickly and competitively to changing customer tastes. This meant that sometimes important strategic decisions were made without reference to specialist technical management, let alone

worker representatives. Similar characteristics could be observed in the motor parts company. From management's viewpoint, the market set very definite limits upon the extent to which job security or consultation could be guaranteed. Once again, in order to remain competitive, emphasis was placed upon flexibility and adaptability. (Similar characteristics were observed in the furniture industry by Marchington and Loveridge 1983: 75-76).

Although part of the private sector in terms of ownership, the metals technology centre was similar to the telecommunications public market sector corporation. Both organisations operated according to the price mechanism and were expected to achieve economic profit targets. Overall, however, while there certainly are market constraints upon the nationalised industries, the operation of the telecommunications public corporation in practice meant that it was a long way from the context of the private sector. In the non-market public sector such as local government, the lack of a price mechanism as a means of determining output and raising revenue puts the onus for decision-making into the political sphere where the relationship between the provision of services and the means of paying for them is remote, denying any direct role for consumer demand in revealing preferences.

It can be argued, then, that different economic contexts of the employing organisations affected management decision-making in the private and public sector case studies. Major decisions in the private sector studies were generally taken by boards of directors,

but lower-level managers were also expected to contribute with initiatives at their own levels. The textiles and metals technology companies were small, measured by both sales turnover and number of workers, which enabled lines of communication to be short. In contrast, motor parts was large, complex and bureaucratic in operation. But even here, since company markets and production processes were often segmented by specialisation in the goods produced, there was frequently a need to decentralise a good deal of decision-making to the operating units, leaving the head office primarily concerned with co-ordination and capital allocation functions.

In telecommunications, the political climate had become increasingly unsympathetic to the consensus industrial relations approach. In the 1980s an adequate response to the political and market challenges required a flexible and co-operative labour force. This was seen to require a re-assertion of managerial control over the organisation of work in the broadest sense. In the local authority, despite the pressures caused by public expenditure reductions, decision-making took place in a different atmosphere. In general the function was one of administration rather than management, with actual decisions often clearly being made not by individuals but by groups. For the most part policy was formulated on the basis of long-term rules since these rules had to be both general, in that they applied across a range of situations and specific, to give detailed guidance. For this reason also decisions were generally made quite high up the organisation and were interpreted lower down.

A further factor affecting managerial strategies was the diffusion of goals. In the private sector case studies, management could often easily appreciate what would advance the goal of profit, sales or output. But goals in the local authority were more difficult to determine and evaluate. In total, management decision-making in the local authority involved hierarchic administrative structures in which rules were paramount, individual decision-making played a relatively small role and the primary objective was consistency. This managerial environment nevertheless had advantages in providing good administration of industrial relations and this helped to create a relatively harmonious relationship in the local authority study. This was also the case in the public sector telecommunications study where, despite the changes in structure and operational demands, at the time of the research the 'good employer obligations' could still be identified.

Thus industrial relations strategies which managements had used differed between the case studies. What was seen as important in the majority of studies during a period of change was the pre-existing management approach to labour and the trade unions; whether they had adopted a paternalistic philosophy, used conflict bargaining, or embraced human relations philosophies. The exception was the motor parts case where the stimuli to management action were both market forces and the role of political contingency in that the company was seriously in debt to the government (see also Scarborough 1984; Willman and Winch 1985).

In many respects, certainly when viewed from the perspective of the debates on changes in the organisation of work and their implications for workers and trade unions, the most striking thing which emerges from these case studies is how little trauma seemed to be created. Even the extent to which considerations of work reorganisation entered into management thinking was relatively limited in some cases. Whilst confirming that management clearly affects workplace unionism, this section has revealed that managerial strategy in the case studies lacked any overall coherence. But the evidence from these studies also reveals how technical change has been especially important in facilitating the redesign of jobs and rendering labour more flexible. Much is shown to depend upon the character of labour and product markets. This theme is explored in the following section.

Technical Change and the Nature of Work

The previous chapter showed how, in telecommunications, technical change was part of the on-going development of telephone exchange switching and transmission equipment incorporating advanced micro-electronic technology over the past decade. In contrast, in motor parts, local government and textiles, until the early 1980s, office automation had been a piecemeal process of trial and error. People thought simply in terms of individual pieces of equipment, a very different situation from telecommunications and the recent changes towards integration of computers and other office equipment: word management, electronic filing and retrieving information, and

micrographics. In metals technology, design and development work by research officers and technicians was linked, on the one hand, to research and development and, on the other, to production management. Micro-electronic technology was being utilised to improve the technical efficiency of established testing processes. For the small number of supporting clerical staff, the main technical change was the introduction of word processors. Changes were slow to be introduced at the time of the research but the potential for the development of office technology was similar here as it was in motor parts, local government and textiles.

In all the case studies, but most clearly in motor parts and textiles, new forms of work organisation were facilitated by changing technologies. They enabled broad skills to be deployed flexibly, altered patterns of training, changed the balances between occupations and had consequential effects upon pay structures. For example, occupations concerned with the filing and retrieval of information were dramatically affected. Similarly the use made of computers to deal with complex inventory and work scheduling problems significantly affected jobs in production control, material handling, purchasing and inspection. However, whilst certain occupational skills were contracting, others such as those associated with work preparation, distribution, information processing and systems design were developing. New technology was causing a further separation between the more highly skilled and the less skilled sections of the workforces. This was occurring because many clerical and administrative workers were vulnerable to

technical change whilst those with skills more allied to the new technology were finding further opportunities for acquiring more skills or technical status.

With the introduction of more flexible forms of computing, for clerical and administrative workers the 'one person, one job' concept resulting from the 'principles' of scientific management was becoming increasingly suspect. Computerised systems were integrating workflows and thus reducing the scope for individual job 'ownership'. They were providing the opportunity to re-examine the ways jobs related to each other and the context in which they were carried out. For many clerks work was becoming increasingly standardised and routine. Conversely, the potential available in new technology to provide information meant that some lower grade workers were now in a position to make judgements previously the province of more senior staff or specialists. Thus technical change directly or indirectly affected the labour force and the unions in two areas: job security and skill levels, and work organisation and working conditions.

The effects upon the nature of work

A common perception of technical change is that it leads to the loss of jobs and deskilling of the workforce. In support of this, historical studies can point to the displacement of manual labour such as the decline of agricultural employment due to farm automation or the deskilling effects of computer-controlled machines

on traditionally skilled machine operators. Although there was anecdotal evidence in the case studies to support this popular view, in a detailed analysis justification of this process was difficult to sustain. For example, in the four case studies where office technology had been introduced there was no directly corresponding loss of jobs. The use of word processors was obviously a factor in causing the productivity of the clerical workers to remain constant or to increase. However, the loss of jobs was more to do with the process of restructuring in motor parts and textiles rather than the word processors *per se*. Technical change did not, therefore, have a straightforward impact upon employment levels but upon factors affecting job content including the skill requirements.

But the issue of deskilling or reskilling should not be discussed without considering what constituted 'skill' for the three occupational groups. The previous chapter noted that the work or information processes of establishments and their departments varied considerably and subsequently the content of jobs also demonstrated considerable variation. Particular attention has been drawn to the impact that new technology is having upon clerical work. It is in this area that technologies are likely to have a predominantly substitutive effect upon labour input by allowing the automatic processing of information traditionally performed manually. In this study a similar result followed from changes in skill arising from the use of word processors. The word processors did replace some of the traditional typing skills such as lining-up, error correction and so on, but they also provided new opportunities

and the use of new skills in deciding upon the form of presentation a final document would take. These new skills were akin to the job of a typesetter and in one instance, the marketing department in motor parts, involved the operators in minor computer programming work.

The word processors also created new divisions of labour among the clerical workers. Long reports and lengthy documents were identified as being particularly suitable for the word processors and subsequently became the major word processor task being performed. There was a general consensus among the clerical workers that such documents were more interesting to work on because of the satisfaction in producing the final and complete report. Hence these case studies demonstrated that with this specialised technology there was a restructuring process occurring creating new divisions of labour and contributing to an overall job loss.

A similar restructuring process was found to be taking place among the technical workers. In motor parts, local government and textiles deskilling had also taken place in the maintenance field as a result of the replacement of electro-mechanical systems by micro-electronic systems. The maintenance requirement of the new equipment was less and this had led to the deskilling of the maintenance technicians. But certain higher skilled electronic jobs were created. In the telecommunications study, the technicians, using their traditional knowledge, could contrive more effective

ways of diagnosing faults than was suggested by the equipment's self-diagnostic facility, and they had developed the ability to change the programs. At the metals technology centre, micro-electronics had also tended to upgrade certain jobs for highly skilled staff by removing the repetitive part of their work and allowing time for the exercise of wider professional skills.

Thus the parallel effects of the reduction in demand for existing skills and increase in demand for new skills could also be seen among the technical groups. Whether or not micro-electronics provided an opportunity for upgrading or resulted in downgrading depended in part upon the possibilities for replacing displaced staff with electronic and computer-related skills. Moreover, structural barriers existed between different segments in the labour forces. The case studies showed that it was the skilled manual jobs which were being eliminated but technical non-manual work was being created.

Simon (1982) even argued that technical change in general and computer technology in particular have had a positive effect upon the quality of work. He argued that if factory operatives and clerical workers declined as a proportion of the labour force, while professional and technical workers increased, then, since the latter group normally rate their jobs more highly, there would be a net increase in reported job satisfaction unless aspirations change. This argument, however, ignores the impact that technical change has in changing the quality of jobs within and between occupational

groups. To give an example, the introduction of word processing systems, as noted earlier, is separating the tasks of correspondence, typing and administrative secretarial work. The new group of administrative secretaries carry out relatively little typing work but the barrier between managerial and secretarial work is not being broken down and social barriers remain a considerable constraint to secretarial promotion (see Crompton and Jones 1984).

In addition to skills and qualifications, the work of the technical workers was distinguished from that of clerks and administrators by the control they had over the pace of work and the physical working environment. The introduction of word processing led to a polarisation of skills and also to an increase in the work intensity of typing jobs. The variety of work was reduced and possibility for management control over the pace of work increased. The use of word processors also raised the clerks' physical productivity by reducing the time spent retyping corrections and handling paper. The operators now spent more time typing new material. The possibility of human contact was thus reduced and social isolation at work and work intensity were increased. Now an increase in isolation at work may not only increase stress and health problems for workers, but it also substantially reduces the potential for collective action through trade unions since lateral contact is reduced. The studies of motor parts, textiles and to a lesser extent local government showed that the introduction of computer systems reduced the possibilities for informal, lateral contact and

only allowed essential, hierarchical contact with supervisors or subordinates.

VDUs had become a standard means of communication between the clerical workers and computerised equipment, but had brought health problems for the operators. This was the second of the trade unions' concern about the problems of VDUs, the other being negotiators' awareness of the possible effects of new technology upon job security. Senior representatives received requests from members for information on the health effects of VDUs. Many of these queries were vague but concerned eye-strain, stress, fatigue, back pains, headaches and skin inflammation.

How these two problems for trade unions cannot, in practice, be separated for health and safety issues are part of the introduction of new technology. An attempt to limit the time of operating a VDU is to recognise that most job restructuring to accommodate VDUs fails to create more satisfying work and tries to minimise harmful effects on the operator's health. The trade union response in the case studies to the problems of VDUs put most emphasis upon the work environment and equipment standards. Less attention was paid to changes in working conditions, particularly job design and its implications. The emphasis upon measureable standards had come about because the union representatives were faced with managers' unwillingness to discuss aspects of job design which might have changed the balance of control over the new technology. The problems of VDUs highlight the problems of work organisation as a

whole for the unions. They were faced with an uphill job in getting problems recognised and had no systematic way of dealing with these issues.

These effects and issues raised by the implementation of technology in the case studies all showed an unsurprising similarity. For clerical and administrative workers changing job skills and health problems were the major concerns whilst the major effects were grade demarcation, health problems of an ergonomic kind and a general feeling of uncertainty. For technical workers micro-electronics increased their freedom to carry out work, but also provided the stimulus for small working units which were centrally co-ordinated.

The ambiguous and contradictory effects of technical change can thus be seen in the simultaneous upgrading and downgrading of skills and working conditions and lend support to the view outlined in Chapter 2 that new technology may have the effect of further polarising and separating different groups within labour markets. Also, the change in job skills can be the result of the introduction of technology with a certain purpose and particular objective in mind. To combat job loss the economic and political objectives need to be challenged as well as addressing the purpose of the technology.

The effects upon trade unions

At a formal level, it was normally the case that union representatives accepted management's arguments about the efficiency of particular technologies and the working practices associated with them. Workers simply did not see the technical aspects of work as matters for their concern and became involved only when areas which they did see as their legitimate concerns were affected; generally staffing levels and working conditions. Trade union workplace organisations became involved in technical change only to the extent that the change impinged upon traditional collective bargaining issues.

Informally, however, workplace representatives in the telecommunications and metals technology case studies did become involved in important ways in technical matters, especially when it came to the establishment of working practices. Although workers were at an enormous disadvantage, they did manage on occasions to construct arguments about the efficiency of their own preferred methods. The telecommunications technicians are a good case in point, but even more impressive were the arguments generated by the technicians and research staff in the metals technology centre. Even in these cases, however, workers generated arguments only at the implementation stage of innovation. The design and choice of technology were thus unquestionably management prerogatives; their technical choices rarely being considered matters for union representatives' concern.

The distinguishing feature, then, of the introduction of new technology was that the unions reacted to management decisions. In the local authority, this reaction at times amounted to an underlying hostility which sought to reject technical change. Where this was not possible, for example, in motor parts, an attitude of passive acceptance often appeared to be adopted. This is to be expected. Trade unions are, by historical tradition, reactive organisations whose basic aim is the defence of their members' rights. Collective bargaining in telecommunications and metals technology, although in advance in the range of issues negotiated of the other trade unions in the case studies, also faced limitations on the kind of involvement the unions could have for technical change. This was demonstrated by the trade unions' exclusion from the early decision-making process for system design and later in the reactive role in which the unions were placed when negotiating technical change.

Where unions are well organised, many of the issues which are raised by new technology are already covered by agreements. What happened with new technology was basically what had happened with other types of technical change in the past, and more generally in the workplace. In other words, to explain why the unions played such a limited role in relation to technical change it is more useful to consider why they played a limited role more generally, rather than to focus upon the special qualities of new technology. For there was very little about the installation of the new equipment which was likely to change these traditional patterns of union activity.

In the same way the role of the unions in the telecommunications and metals technology cases was as influential as it was precisely because of the organisational and bargaining position of the unions more generally.

In both those studies the more general nature of union bargaining activity at the workplace was reflected in their approach to new technology. This was characterised by two related features: a high degree of bargaining awareness and a strong 'craft' ethos. Both factors encouraged an awareness of the potential implications of technical changes and a strong concern with traditional job territories. What they sought to do was to cover the new issues which technical change raised. They therefore added to existing agreements issues which would shape future technical change. The agreements in effect established that traditional 'craft' goals and principles should still apply in the context of technical change both in the present and the future.

To some degree the same is also true of the local authority case study. For the first time the clerical workers would be working with VDUs. The union therefore successfully sought to establish new health and safety principles in the form of VDU guidelines. But health and safety had always been one of the issues with which the union had dealt. In other respects, however, the union in local government expanded its range of influence significantly during the period of the research and in part this reflected the fact that issues which the new technology raised, in particular matters

relating to redundancy and to redeployment, were also being raised for the first time more generally within the authority. Until then the framework of local joint regulation had not covered these issues. In addition, the union organisation was becoming stronger; both the union leaders and management were gradually adjusting to the realities of a steward system of representation rather than departmental representatives within the authority.

Although the unions were well aware of the importance of technical change, a problem for them was that they had incoherent policies about the issue. An indication of this was the way in which, particularly in telecommunications and metals technology, the unions adopted a retrospective bargaining stance of running through a check-list of points to ensure that past practices would be maintained or improved upon. Bargaining then needed to go no further. Where changes were made in working conditions and work organisation they were often favourable, notably in telecommunications, where the union was presented with what it wished: a means of increasing the skill of more routine grades. The union was not going to reject that opportunity.

It might be claimed that if management was conceding so much it would have been possible for the unions to have gained even more. If the workplace organisations had had coherent policies and pursued these firmly, who knows what would have happened ? Such behaviour is, in practice, rare. More importantly, the extent to which it can occur depends upon the nature of the membership and the pattern of

union organisation more generally. The different interests of particular work groups constrained the extent to which matters could be pushed by the unions who had to take into account both the interests of those directly affected by the issue and those of other workers.

In brief, the case studies showed clearly that the impact of technical change upon trade unions was related to their general policies and activities. This can be explained in a number of ways. Firstly, many aspects of the developments associated with technical change were already covered by the existing pattern of joint regulation. Secondly, the existing pattern of union activity reflected its goals and the existing balance of power and these had not been fundamentally changed by new technology. In the more well-developed workplace organisations, such as telecommunications and to a lesser extent local government, new union initiatives followed previous union action into new sets of demands, whilst in metals technology this action reflected more general changes both in the union and in the style of industrial relations in the company. In the case of motor parts and textiles, the role of the unions had changed in a less favourable direction, but this reflected changes in the balance of power and in management's more general strategy towards industrial relations than inherent features of the technical change.

These policies and activities of the unions all occurred within a particular context: traditional patterns of bargaining and particular

degrees of bargaining awareness. Put at its most simple, if a union has in the past been unable to negotiate over an issue or if in the past it has shown itself unwilling or unable to intrude into the bargaining process, then it is unlikely to be able to do so when technical change is introduced.

Conclusions

This chapter has provided a more detailed account of the three main features affecting workplace unionism outlined in Part I and confirmed in the case studies. The first of these has concerned union organisation and the structure of collective bargaining. The second focussed upon the industrial relations strategies pursued by management and the nature of the employing organisation. The third related these interpretations of collective bargaining and management to the impact of technical change upon the nature of work and the unions.

Levels of bargaining in the case studies showed a strikingly similar pattern to that found in the survey. The public sector studies and the large motor parts private sector study negotiated at national (or equivalent) level, but negotiated at establishment level too and, in the local authority case study, with some office-level bargaining. The remaining private sector studies showed bargaining mainly at establishment level, especially at shop-floor level. As to scope, negotiations generally tended to be confined to the traditional issues of industrial relations. Most negotiations were about

staffing levels and pay; training and health were frequently negotiated; bargaining over choice of equipment occurred in telecommunications and metals technology; investment strategy was the subject of negotiation only in the former. The smallest range of issues bargained was in the motor parts case study, whilst telecommunications had the greatest range of bargaining.

But in both the public and private studies the role of the wider union was relevant in developing the scope of bargaining and the range of union initiatives. Generally, the picture which emerges is that where there is a high degree of union development and bargaining at a variety of levels, then the scope in relation to bargaining provides for a greater opportunity to negotiate general issues about management strategy at workplace level and bargaining over more detailed aspects of local change. Important characteristics of workplace organisations are the extent of co-operation within and between unions and the strength of connections between the workplace and the wider union.

However, as Brown (1973) made clear in his research into manual unions, management exerts the most important influence upon the goals and behaviour of workplace organisations. In this research, the pattern of bargaining and the impact of the unions were clearly shaped by the industrial relations strategy which management developed and the nature of the employing organisation. This was indicated by management's readiness to negotiate with and consult the unions. In four of the five case studies management fostered

'strong bargaining relationships' with the non-manual trade union representatives despite increased environmental pressures.

The motor parts case was a clear exception. Far from promoting the common interests of management and workforce, the effect of the recession was to emphasise the different ways these interests could be pursued, the costs that particular groups would have to bear and, therefore, the prospects of very divergent results from common interests. This was seen in the variety of techniques by which management sought to achieve greater flexibility in its use of labour. The situation was very different in the other four case studies, despite the recession. Here managers maintained their commitment to collective bargaining and had done so because of a co-operative attitude towards industrial relations in general. There had been no attempt to undermine bargaining and managers emphasised the continued requirements to maintain co-operation with the unions as pressures increased. The bargaining processes illustrated the commitment of management to a 'pluralist' perspective on industrial relations.

While management had adopted a tougher approach to the trade union in motor parts and had resorted, both there and in textiles, to the secondary labour market, more common had been the adoption of participative techniques aimed at the individual worker, as well as the development of consultation systems with trade unions. The use in the private sector of scientific management techniques did not grow but there was greater use of the payment system. In local

government, however, management had made no resort to the participative techniques or the use of the payment system to win worker support. Among clerical and administrative groups, management had sought to make more changes in work organisation than they had among technical groups. In the main, however, most employers were not adopting a coherent and sophisticated strategy of weakening the labour force and the unions.

One factor which is clearly very relevant to an explanation of variations in management's approach towards the unions is the pattern of ownership. It is in the public sector that the support for trade unionism might have declined from five years previously. If this occurred, it would seem that political forces are a more potent inducement to an aggressive approach on the part of the employer than are market forces. However, the power of these political pressures was not apparent in the public sector case studies: perhaps because they were not in that part of it over which the government has the most direct control.

Where the establishment was suffering in market terms, management achieved some changes in working practices without formal negotiation. In the private sector motor parts and textiles, the unions were aware that the companies were experiencing serious difficulties in the product market and were prepared to accept changes as part of an implicit bargain for the maintenance of the establishment and employment. Although the metals technology centre, in terms of ownership, was part of the private sector, its

economic structure was more characteristic of the public market sector. While it was similar to the private sector in that it was expected to achieve economic self-sufficiency, the feature distinguishing it from motor parts and textiles was that it occupied a strategic position in the product market.

Effective involvement in collective bargaining cannot, of course, be guaranteed simply by placing an issue on the agenda for joint consultation nor by securing basic negotiating rights. As the research indicates this gives no assurance as to the depth of that bargaining. However, the case studies were chosen to assess changes using new technology as a 'critical test'. The interpretations presented in this chapter suggest that, even in times of recession, not all managements will seek to degrade workers' jobs and some are becoming increasingly aware of the disadvantages of a very detailed division of labour and tight control over workers. These disadvantages can arise both from the nature of the production process itself (see also Kelly 1982) and the adverse effects of degradation upon worker motivation and compliance with management goals. More generally, management rarely considered the work organisation and staffing implications of technical change until fairly late in the day. Indeed, changes were often made only after the technology had been introduced.

These findings lead to three important conclusions. Firstly, that technical change cannot be simply interpreted as a means by which management further extends its control over labour. Secondly, the

effects of technical change upon job content are to a large extent determined by factors other than the technology itself. The implications for job content of technical change depended upon the nature of the product or service, the state of the product and labour markets and the power and strategies of management and workers. A third important conclusion is that the overall effect of technical change upon work has been more favourable for technical than for clerical and administrative workers. Some jobs had been deskilled and yet others had been upgraded. In some cases new technology had led to an improved working environment, whilst in others it had led to increased supervision and a changed pace of work.

Indeed, the evidence from the case studies suggests that employment consisted of three distinctive groups. For technical workers in telecommunications and metals technology the introduction of new technology was leading to a concentration of skills which were primarily computer-related: the understanding of control, production and mechanical systems; logic, systems and software skills; and general data processing awareness. For maintenance technicians in motor parts, local government and textiles, the deskilling process led to a change in what is understood as skill. Skill had been mainly experience-based, requiring long periods of apprenticeship and training. Skills were now based upon analytic or logical ability rather than experience. Here a polarisation of skill requirements was taking place between, on the one hand, highly skilled testing, inspection and maintenance technicians and, on the

other, less skilled maintenance technicians with the relatively straightforward job of replacing faulty modules. Particular attention has been drawn to the impact that computerisation was having upon clerical and administrative workers, the third distinctive group. It was in this area that new technology was having the most marked effect upon occupational activities. The introduction of word processing systems affected the skill levels of lower-grade clerical and administrative work in two ways: a change of work organisation with a separation of typing and administrative work; and less skill required in the layout, accuracy, execution and correction of work, since this was all performed by the machine.

Does new technology pose a threat to workplace unionism ? If technical change is informed by management strategy of shifting power from workers to employers, some have argued, then union organisation will be seriously weakened by new technology. The power base of the union members' readiness and ability to impose sanctions upon the employer will be seriously challenged. But if management strategies affect the way in which work changes with technical change, then it seems reasonable to expect that workers' strategies will have a similar effect. As discussed in Chapter 2, one of the major criticisms of the Braverman thesis of degradation is its failure to take into account the effects of worker resistance.

In seeking to account for variations in the effects upon union organisation a number of points stand out. The more favourable the effects of technical change upon job content, the more likely it is

that union organisation has become stronger. Moreover, those factors which affected the ways in which technical change influenced work were also found to affect the way in which union organisation was changed. In brief, the more developed the trade union organisation and the wider the range of its bargaining activity, the stronger the union organisation was likely to be after the change. It has been suggested here that this was so for three reasons. Firstly, if trade unions are able to negotiate over a particular range of issues in relation to technical change, they are likely to be doing so more generally. Secondly, since managements often appear not to use new technology as an opportunity to introduce dramatic changes to the pattern of industrial relations, many aspects of technical change will be covered by pre-existing agreements and joint regulation. Thirdly, only well-developed organisations will generally be able to devise policies which intrude more deeply into traditional areas of managerial prerogative.

Whilst the impact of managerial strategies may be particularly marked in the case of new technology, they are likely to have similar effects more generally. Indeed, given that new technology is part of a more general package of changes, it is this wider policy which is likely to have greater relevance. Moreover, the findings indicate the general need for unions to think more strategically, not only about technical change but also about the wider nature of management strategy. For it is that strategy which is likely to shape both the impact of new technology and other

changes which may have greater effects upon union members than technical change. This lack of strategic thinking on the part of trade unions has often been a long-standing one.

In sum, the case study findings have confirmed those key features affecting workplace organisation outlined in Part I. Collective bargaining arrangements, management structures and strategies, the market for labour and for the product or service and the effects of technical change upon the nature of work, are the key elements in developing approaches to the study of contemporary non-manual unionism. This returns the discussion to more general questions about the nature of non-manual trade union workplace organisations which will be discussed in the concluding chapter.

8 Conclusions

The research was designed to investigate the patterns and character of non-manual unions' workplace organisations and the factors influencing them. Previous writers on non-manual workers have perceived major differences between non-manual and manual trade unionism. The implicit, and often explicit, assumption has been that non-manual workers have distinctive and negative attitudes towards unions. This research has discussed and provided answers to the two main questions arising from the manual/non-manual trade union distinction: firstly, what similarities and differences between non-manual and manual workplace trade unionism can be identified and secondly, how can such similarities and differences be explained ? The central finding of this thesis is that non-manual and manual workplace unionism is essentially similar.

This final chapter relates the detailed findings of the main body of research to various approaches to workplace industrial relations and contributes to debates on non-manual trade unionism. The research has identified and investigated four main related areas. Firstly, by focussing upon the patterns and factors influencing workplace organisations it provides a theoretical perspective to the analysis of what has become known as workplace industrial relations. Secondly, the study demonstrates that union character is significantly influenced by the work situation of non-manual workers. Thirdly, it casts considerable doubt on the argument that patterns of workplace representatives' bureaucracy entail the development of 'incorporated' organisations. Fourthly, the research

confirms that the picture in relation to job control, work organisation and managerial strategies is often a contradictory one, thus strengthening the findings of some other recent studies concerning manual workers, technical change and work organisation (Wilkinson 1983; Rose and Jones 1985; Thompson and Bannon 1985).

Summary

Framework for analysis

Part I developed a framework for the analysis of workplace organisations. Chapter 1 began by assessing the importance of manual shop stewards. Previous research, by studying stewards; their numbers, elections and tenure, their functions and the distribution of time spent on various tasks, steward organisations and meetings, revealed important aspects of the nature of workplace organisations. However, it was also assumed that some kind of collective orientation or 'workplace consciousness' exists in a workplace organisation involving members, not just their leaders. If 'ordinary' members have no awareness of what is being negotiated then workplace consciousness cannot be said to exist. The ability to mobilise the workers is, therefore, an essential characteristic of workplace organisations. For without the support provided by the membership of a workplace organisation its leaders can function only as channels of communication when conflicting interests of the employer and workers are brought to the bargaining table. For workplace organisations to directly mobilise their members they need to have practical goals which relate to workers' interests.

Thus, although leadership and consciousness are essential characteristics, in the long-term union pressure depends upon the ability to mobilise workers.

Chapter 2 noted that previous writers on non-manual workers have perceived major differences between non-manual and manual trade unionism. Firstly, a difference is argued to exist in the work situation: the nature of tasks, the dispersal of membership, the organisation of work and the system of management control. Secondly, there is a difference in expectations of workplace organisations. The two central issues are whether the loss of previous influence and autonomy plays a significant role in non-manual workplace trade unionism and if it does, whether non-manual unionists are concerned to restore differentials in relation to manual workers. Thirdly, collective bargaining arrangements. It has been suggested that a useful starting point to test the hypothesis of a polarisation between non-manual and manual union activity is to concentrate upon trade union participation in job regulation (Bain et al 1973). Finally, the extent to which workers make use of their bargaining power depends not only upon their orientations, work situations and expectations, but also upon the trade union structure and organisation.

Chapter 3 indicated that although workers' own initiative and commitment is a necessary condition for the development of workplace organisations, it is an insufficient condition. The size of the workplace has been found to be an extremely important influence in a number of major studies. Larger organisations can

accumulate resources, acquire skills and experience in bargaining as well as increase the stability of shop steward organisations. The industry or sector of employment also influences the development of workplace organisations because of different structures and strategies of employers. And the effect of technology upon work has played an important role in workplace organisations.

Variety within collective bargaining is identified by the levels and scope of bargaining. Trade unions can either encourage or discourage workplace independence. Therefore, union structure and strategy are important characteristics. A major influence upon workplace organisations is management. Where workers' representatives and their workplace organisations are formally recognised by management a 'restricted autonomy' is allowed by management in the administration of collective bargaining agreements and the labour process.

Non-manual workplace unionism

Part II outlined the research focus and methodology and presented the findings from the empirical data. Chapter 4 mapped out the broad areas of interest upon which the empirical research focussed, developing a series of classifications which facilitated analysis of workplace organisation amongst non-manual workers. Three main concepts were discussed: the patterns of workplace organisations, the factors influencing these organisations and union character.

In Chapter 5 the general pattern of non-manual trade union organisation and activity found in the survey was investigated. The overwhelming conclusion from this survey was how closely the pattern of non-manual organisations resembled previous research findings on their manual counterparts. The tendencies identified in manual shop steward organisations towards centralisation and formalisation were apparent in the pattern of non-manual representatives and their organisations. Both in the representatives' bargaining role and formal hierarchy within their organisations, throughout public and private sectors of manufacturing and to a lesser extent in the public service sector, the organisational forms adopted by representatives showed a striking similarity. In larger workplaces the existence of a committee structure and an organisational hierarchy were particularly marked.

The clearest findings from the survey were the importance of size, bargaining levels and the wider union. The likelihood of there being a well-developed organisation significantly increased where pay bargaining was at national or industry level and this type of organisation was more common in manufacturing and public services.

Even when there was only one union at the workplace the wider union had a considerable impact upon the nature of workplace organisations. Important differences were found between trade union branches whose members were drawn from a single workplace and branches encompassing members from several workplaces or employers. A single employer branch was much more closely

associated with a well-developed workplace organisation. In contrast to findings from research on manual stewards, the amount of senior representatives' contact with full-time officials was not associated with national level pay bargaining; nor was there more frequent contact in manufacturing than in the public service. However, the larger workforces tended to both be more likely to have well-developed organisations and to have contact with their officials.

The survey results analysing the use of sanctions by workplace organisations suggest that the incidence of strikes is no longer, if it ever was, an adequate measure of the level of overt collective conflict. Broadly speaking, less than one-half of the establishments affected by any type of industrial action were affected by a strike which would have come within the definition used for official records. This is significant in view of the growing proportion of non-manual unionists in the labour force. By using tactics such as working to rule, blacking of work and so on workplace organisations employed a range of sanctions without causing their members to lose pay. Non-strike sanctions, of course, represent a relatively popular form of pressure because their use can be varied to meet tactical needs as well as putting pressure on management while involving few, if any, costs for workers. It is likely that non-strike sanctions are more effective for non-manual than for manual workers because the former do not normally work such rigid hours. Nevertheless, the survey evidence suggested that this deployment of sanctions depended upon the existence of an established workplace organisation.

However, significant differences persisted between and within industries and sectors. Whilst some features such as size, bargaining levels and so on appeared to be quite closely related to the form of workplace organisation there were variations. Moreover, to explain why sanctions emerge, strikes as well as non-strike action, it is essential to have an understanding of the workplace relations which, of course, the survey method is unable to provide. The measures used in the survey data were necessarily limited, focussing upon formal organisation. While actual patterns of union organisation and activity are likely to be related to formal structure, they are not totally determined by it. Thus the case studies included certain refinements on the survey analysis.

The case studies presented in Chapter 6 supported the previous findings that structure of union organisation is shaped by workforce size and the pattern of collective bargaining and that these, in turn, are strongly influenced by the employer. Nevertheless, the pattern of bargaining is also related to union organisation and the strategies pursued by the union. Another important feature of the role which the union plays in collective bargaining is that well-developed union organisation can take different forms.

The significant point about union organisational development, external integration and more than one level of bargaining, is the importance of union activity and organisation at a number of levels and some form of co-ordination between them. While the 'workerist' conception of unions stresses the importance of shop-floor strength and member commitment, the bureaucratic model stresses formal

structures which bring together the diverse interests and expectations of various groups. It has been argued here that both aspects of union organisation are important.

'Workerism' alone, not only leads to sectionalism, parochialism and patchy patterns of union influence, but also cannot move far beyond the most immediate aspects of the wage-effort bargain. On the other hand, centralised bureaucratic structures may permit unions to play a role in broader issues which shape the wage-effort bargain but the extent of that general influence is likely to be limited without strong organisation at lower levels. Where 'workerist' and 'bureaucratic' patterns of influence co-exist and are integrated, then union organisation is likely to be strong and where union organisation is well-developed and where there is a high level of external integration, then there is likely to be a greater range of bargaining at various levels and union organisation is likely to ensure greater and more stable union influence.

Given this 'model' of trade union organisation, the degree of development in the public sector studies of the workplace union, characterised by large concentrations and high proportions of union members within the overall workforce, was particularly important. For the private sector groups, which represented both a smaller number and smaller proportion of union members amongst a company's workforce, there was a limit to building up their own union organisation independently and it was difficult to maintain close relations with the wider union.

One of the reasons for a decline in union influence in at least one case (motor parts) was precisely because union organisation was not really developed. Here and to a lesser extent in the textiles study, union organisation which was largely confined to higher levels was limited by its grass-roots weakness. On the other hand, what appeared to have happened in telecommunications, metals technology and to a lesser extent in local government, was that the 'workerist' component of union organisation had become stronger. If this trend continues, without any serious weakening of the more 'bureaucratic' aspects of union organisation then it might be expected that in future these workplace trade unions will achieve a greater degree of influence.

However, not all union members have the same opportunities for this degree of organisational development and influence. The nature of workplace organisation and the policies it pursues will be affected by the nature of the wider union. In particular the research has shown the importance of single employer/industry union structures and also, although to a lesser degree, the significance of single, as against multi-occupational forms of union organisation. In single employer/industry unions, workplace organisation tends to be more developed and there tend to be stronger links with the wider union. These characteristics are associated with a more centralised pattern of bargaining. The consequence is that these unions can more easily co-ordinate their actions at various levels and concentrate their limited resources upon developing a more strategic approach.

The more homogeneous a union's membership, particularly where it monopolises the occupation(s) or industry concerned, the better it can pursue a coherent policy since it will tend to think more strategically. Single occupational unions may also form more coherent policies, but their focus will be upon a particular section of the labour market. They will, therefore, attend less to the general nature of employer strategies. A high degree of multi-union development can in effect act as a substitute for a single employer/industry structure in terms of shaping the perspective and strategy of a workplace organisation. But the impact of the workplace organisation is likely to be limited. This relative decentralisation of organisation, albeit partially overcome by multi-union negotiating bodies, clearly imposes constraints upon the extent to which workplace organisations can actually affect management strategy.

Factors influencing union character

Part III has turned to the analysis of factors influencing trade unions in the workplace. The interpretations have shed light upon an explanatory framework for the character of non-manual workplace trade unionism. Chapter 7 showed that the levels of bargaining in the case studies were strikingly similar to the pattern found in the survey. The public sector studies negotiated at national level and also establishment level too. The private sector studies showed bargaining mainly occurred at establishment level although also at shop-floor level. Generally, the range of bargaining was very wide but confined to the traditional issues of industrial relations. The

vast majority of negotiations took place over staffing levels and pay. Training and health and safety were frequently negotiated. Bargaining over choice of equipment was found in telecommunications and metals technology. Investment strategy was the subject of negotiation only in telecommunications. The smallest number of issues bargained was found in the motor parts case study, whilst telecommunications had the greatest range of bargaining.

But in both the public and private studies the role of the wider union was relevant in developing the scope of bargaining and the range of union initiatives. Generally, where there was a high degree of union development and bargaining at a variety of levels, then there was a greater opportunity to negotiate general issues of management strategy at workplace level and to bargain over more detailed aspects of local change. Across the case studies the range of bargaining was highest in unions dealing with a single employer or industry and lowest in multi-industry unions. Similar variations emerged with respect to union initiatives and bargaining about strategic issues such as investment and choice of equipment. On the other hand, issues related to the protection of an occupation (especially training), received more attention in bargaining by the single occupation unions. All of which supports the picture emerging from the survey.

It was shown clearly that management industrial relations strategy can affect union character by a readiness to recognise representatives, by providing facilities for union activities and by being prepared to negotiate at the workplace. It was found that

employers were not generally adopting a 'tougher' approach towards the labour force during the present recession with either a reduction in management support for trade unions or with other aspects of management industrial relations strategy.

While management had adopted a tougher approach to the trade union in motor parts and had resorted, both there and in textiles, to the secondary labour market, more common had been the adoption of participative techniques aimed at the individual worker, as well as consultation with the unions. There did not appear to have been a substantial growth in the use of scientific management techniques but there had been a growing use of the payment system in an attempt to win worker support and commitment to the company. All of these patterns were found in the private sector. Among clerical and administrative groups managements had sought to make changes in work organisation more than they had among technical groups. In the main, however, it appears that the employers had not combined these various industrial relations techniques in a manner which recent commentators suggest. From this assessment it appears that the employers were not adopting a coherent and sophisticated strategy of weakening the labour force and unions.

One factor which is clearly very relevant to explanations of management's industrial relations strategies is the pattern of ownership. In the public sector management support for the unions may have declined in recent years (Batstone et al 1984). In general terms if this has occurred it would seem that political forces are a more potent inducement to an aggressive approach on

the part of the employer than are market forces. However, the power of these political pressures was not apparent in the public sector case studies. It has been suggested here that this was because they were not in that part of it over which the government has the most direct control.

Within the private sector, however, there was an important variation between, on the one hand, motor parts and textiles, and on the other, metals technology. In the former management achieved some changes in working practices without negotiation. This did not occur in the latter. Although the metals technology centre, in terms of ownership, was part of the private sector, its economic structure was more characteristic of the public market sector. While it was similar to the private sector in that it was expected to achieve economic self-sufficiency, its distinguishing feature from the other private sector enterprises was that it occupied a strategic position in the product market.

Two broad areas of union power and influence have been identified in this research; organisational form and influence on bargaining. The survey data enabled analysis of union organisation and an investigation of the level and range of collective bargaining and the use of sanctions through industrial action. However, the survey did not, of course, allow conclusions that measured the depth of union impact on substantive issues. Furthermore, since this survey was carried out, a wealth of evidence testifies to the extent of change in unemployment, product markets, new technology and so on. Thus the case studies provided the opportunity not only to

compare non-manual with manual union bargaining activity but also to assess changes in the non-manual sphere over a five-year period using technical change as a 'critical test'.

But Chapter 7 demonstrated that even in the in-depth case studies it was at times difficult to identify the actual degree of union influence. Very often the union appeared to have achieved its goals without any formal process of negotiation. This did not appear to be the result of overwhelming union dominance, but rather because management and union accepted many points in common and acted accordingly. Union influence was nonetheless considerable in that it had created largely taken-for-granted notions in the mind of management. This point serves to emphasise the complexity of measuring power and influence. It does not merely relate to who wins in situations of conflict, but also concerns the shaping of the agenda. To state this is not to espouse some notion of 'objective' interests, rather it suggests the importance of detailed historical and contextual analysis.

Union Character

Strauss (1954) and Allen (1961) considered non-manual unionism to be a defensive reaction to declining prestige and status. For Lockwood (1958) the major factor behind the growth of clerical unionisation was the bureaucratisation of the workplace. Blackburn and Prandy (1965) sought to provide a consistent theoretical basis for the assessment of the degree of similarity and differentiation between non-manual and manual unions. They presented the concept

of 'unionateness' as a measure of the commitment to the general principles and ideology of trade unionism. The degree of unionateness measured the character of the union and was also considered by these authors to provide an 'index of class consciousness' and a 'measure of potential for class action'.

The critique of Blackburn and Prandy's approach made by Bain and his colleagues (1973) identified its principal weaknesses. Firstly, as a measure of character, each of the seven criteria is ambiguous. A union can score either positively or negatively on each dimension and as a consequence the implication of its 'score' is indeterminate. Secondly, there is the problem of how each of these variables, particularly the continuous ones such as 'preparedness to be militant', can be measured and weighted relative to the other, except by the researcher exercising purely subjective judgement. Thirdly, the implied link between unionateness and class consciousness can be seen to rest on two faulty premises. The first is the assumption that the manual union 'ideal-type' advanced by Blackburn and Prandy to measure non-manual unionateness is itself a measure of a class-consciousness form of worker organisation. Bain and his colleagues illustrated the extent to which manual worker unionism has in fact been characterised by sectionalism, instrumentalism and accommodation to the capitalist control of industrial and state power. High 'unionateness' scores are fully compatible with a wide range of class attitudes. A second and related assumption is that a shift along one of the dimensions of unionateness can only occur because of a shift in the class consciousness of the union's membership. But as Bain and his

colleagues clearly demonstrated, such shifts can also occur for a range of reasons related to the narrowly conceived organisational requirements of the union and the sectional needs of the members.

Two further points have been made by Price (1983) to underline the weakness of the definition of 'unionateness' advanced by Blackburn and Prandy. By proposing a set of 'timeless' criteria, they are making the implicit assumption that trade union activity has remained constant over time. The second point is closely related. Two of the main criteria advanced by Blackburn and Prandy, TUC and Labour Party affiliation, imply a commitment to a broadly similar body of principles and beliefs. In practice, of course, the policies pursued within both organisations by individual unions are extremely variable. If the concept of 'character' as applied to unions is to be meaningful it is necessary to take into account not simply affiliation or non-affiliation, but also the nature of the policies pursued.

Crompton (1970) challenged the concept of union character from a very different perspective. Blackburn and Prandy measured non-manual organisations against a manual union stereotype and characterised them as being either more or less like manual unions. Crompton's concern with this approach was that it 'makes it difficult to conceptualise different modes of representation as *alternative* strategies. In short, the concept may actually impose limitations on the successful analysis of [non-manual] unionism if it is to be used in isolation' (1970:422).

Thus for Crompton the inadequacy of 'unionateness' was in failing to explain why non-manual collective representation assumes a range of different forms. She located the non-manual labour force in a position of structural ambiguity between the functions of capital and the functions of labour. This intermediate position gives rise to considerable variations in the class situations of different non-manual groups. These variations in turn give rise to a range of attitudes and patterns of behaviour, particularly in respect of collective representation, which reflect the ambiguity of their class situation. The key difference in Crompton's approach to those of Lockwood, Blackburn and Prandy, and Bain, lay in her attempt to link external phenomena such as bureaucratisation, employer policies and economic pressures, to the processes of social and economic change within capitalist societies.

Crompton's approach was convincingly criticised by Price (1983) on the grounds that it failed to explore the links between the evolution of the class structure and the behaviour of non-manual workers and their unions. If, as Crompton suggested, an understanding of the non-manual class situation is *essential* to any interpretation of non-manual union behaviour, it could be expected that differences in response would be linked as aspects of the class situation of different occupational groups. However, no such link is suggested by Crompton. As Price noted, 'this leaves the nature of the link between class situation and union character in a highly fluid and unspecified state' (1983:169).

Bain et al (1973) suggested that a more useful starting point to test the hypothesis of differences between non-manual and manual union behaviour is to concentrate upon trade union participation in job regulation. The nature of non-manual workplace trade unionism as revealed in this research supports the view of Bain and his colleagues that the goals and behaviour of non-manual unionists are essentially similar to those of their manual counterparts.

Blackburn and Prandy's argument failed to consider the significance of union organisation, the organisation of work and workers' consciousness of collective interests. As a result, they overlooked the importance of more limited concerns workers have with control and power. This study of workplace organisation illustrates that variations in the nature of membership and organisational development affect the type of issues which are of concern to a union. Where an organisation is well-developed and covers a large proportion of workers, then the union will seek to intrude more into areas which in other cases will be accepted as the sole preserve of management. Similarly, it has been shown that a single occupation union will demonstrate a greater concern over such matters as training and work organisation. Thus the significance of the nature of work and its effect upon union character is of central importance.

Organisation of work

The variety of experience of non-manual workers in the case studies did not mean that there was no co-operative basis to the

organisation of work. On the contrary, for some the institutional organisation of work was essentially co-operative. During the course of production some worked closely as part of a team. In addition work undertaken was often widely intelligible to a large number of workers as a result of extensive job mobility within the workplace. This part of the chapter discusses the implications of this for the opportunities and constraints for trade union activity.

The co-operative basis of non-manual work has been recognised although explanations have varied. Two types of explanation can be identified. Firstly, non-manual work has been seen as increasingly bureaucratised with the result that workers organise collectively in order to obtain a measure of control over changed circumstances of work. Secondly, the co-operative basis of non-manual work has been presented more recently in terms of functional importance. Thus the emphasis in the first explanation has been upon workers' personal work situation, whereas in the second it is upon the significance of work tasks for the production process.

The problem with the personal work situation approach is that the varied dimensions of the organisation of non-manual work are not specified. Nor is the link between the organisation of non-manual work and trade union organisation and activity. The thesis has been that as the personal work situation of non-manual workers becomes increasingly similar to that of the manual worker then prospects for collective organisation are increased. Among the clerks and administrators in the case studies a routinisation and specialisation of tasks (decisive features of a bureaucratised

workforce) was evident. Moreover, areas of discretionary activity had become more restricted and increasingly subject to order and control. However, while some of these administrators had become more or less exclusively concerned with the administration of people, performing a variety of tasks ranging from supervision to the co-ordination of activities, the number of these workers, as a proportion of non-manual workers, had declined relative to technically specialised workers.

Increasingly, then, work for these non-manual workers had become like 'wage-work', recalling Lockwood's thesis that some clerical workers occupy situations that are analogous to the work situations of most manual workers. He concluded that these clerical workers will be bound together in their work. However, apart from the increased size of the workplace and associated rationalisation or mechanisation of work procedures there seems to be no particular reason why individual workers should identify with other workers. Instead, to explain the identification between workers it is necessary to examine the work tasks that are undertaken by workers and to specify, where existing, a co-operative and collective basis of non-manual work.

Workers' consciousness of collective interests

This research has shown that certain technicians and scientific research workers are likely to develop a 'collective consciousness' and engage in significant trade union activity (see also Mann 1973; Mallet 1975; Gorz 1976). There is an increasing contradiction

between, on the one hand, the social organisation of work (co-operative and collective) and, on the other hand, the ownership and control of production. These developments in the social organisation of work, it is argued, result in a new and distinctive form of trade union activity where workers are not prepared to limit their demands to wage claims. They occupy positions in the production process which have transformed them into intellectually creative collective workers. Their basic demands have been largely met with the result that they begin to make new demands to change the organisation of work.

Gorz also wrote about scientific and technical workers employed in situations where they 'supervise, organise, control and command groups of production workers' (1976:167). In the manufacturing case studies the technicians had the tasks of maintaining technical standards and supervision. Trade union activity by these workers was constrained because they were 'controllers'. The objective of trade union activity by these workers was a defence of hierarchy and privilege. By contrast, the 'intellectual' workers were more likely to engage in collective activity.

Gorz provided an explanation for this activity. Collective activity is 'motivated by the frustration and humiliation' non-manual workers experience when they are subjected to the same job evaluation, fragmentation and hierarchical control of work as manual workers. They act 'against hierarchical organisation, fragmentation, and the meaningless of their work and against the loss of all or part of their social privileges' (1976:178). This argument has been

supported and developed by research into industrial supervisors who saw non-manual unions not only as a means of pursuing imposed terms and conditions of employment, but also as a potential means of restoring their position of control over manual workers. The implication is that non-manual unions, to some extent, are seen as a potential counter to the power of manual workers' unions (Armstrong 1986:126-29). The result is that non-manual workers engage in collective trade union action on the basis of differential rather than solidaristic identification (as suggested by Mallet 1975).

However, for the technical and scientific research workers in the case studies, this consciousness was of a 'craft' type and did not conflict with individualist aspirations for career progression. Thus a wide range of political attitudes among members was clearly compatible with similar economic goals. But it would be a mistake to regard this 'pragmatic' blend of individualism and collectivism as a distinctive feature of non-manual workers. For example, Roberts and his colleagues reached the conclusion that both manual and non-manual workers 'are willing to support either individualistic or collective action, or a combination of both, depending upon the strategy that best fits their situations' (1977:134).

Throughout the case studies in this present research it was shown that increasingly the labour process required a series of distinctions between tasks of direct control and surveillance and tasks of administration and technical specialisation. This change was accompanied by managerial changes so that increasingly these

non-manual workers dealt with the employer via specialist members of an industrial relations department or equivalent. In other words, these non-manual workers worked in an increasingly uniform setting. Nevertheless, the examination of work tasks and experiences revealed a variety even where job titles were the same. For some the work required increasing specialisation and technical qualifications while for others it was becoming routinised with little or no areas for discretion. Thus the work prospects for these workers were dissimilar. Some could be optimistic about their future while others were pessimistic or resigned to their fate.

The degree to which individual advance is possible is still likely to be greater for non-manual workers than for manual workers. The expectation of promotion through a grading structure is a relatively common feature of non-manual environments but applies less to manual workers. This unequal distribution of opportunities for individual advance reduces the propensity of non-manual workers to opt for collective strategies (see Price 1983).

However, within the diverse and varied experiences of workers in the case studies there was a co-operative basis to non-manual work: a basis grounded in interdependence of work and fusion of tasks. This enabled these workers to forge an identity of interests. In part this was strengthened by the employment conditions that defined these workers: grading and pay structures, working hours and activities and so on. It was in terms of these immediate and visible features of work that the non-manual workers expressed their perception of these collective interests. These work

arrangements were imposed upon the workers and were products of the history of the employers' activities which included reorganisation, rationalisation and, in some cases, a reduction of the workforce.

The effect of these working conditions was that the workforces were differentiated into groups defined by grading arrangements, pay systems and hours worked. The result was that these conditions became issues for the workers. They enabled non-manual workers to recognise specific and limited sets of interests in common.

A result of the trend away from direct supervision and towards technical administration was the increased involvement of technical workers in co-ordinating activities that were directly related to production. This meant that these workers acquired a control over production since their labour could no longer be substituted. Specialisation and training meant that some non-manual workers were more necessary than other groups for production. Consequently, in the event of disputes these workers could act effectively. 'The ability to impose effective economic sanctions on the employer is less often available [to non-manual groups] than to manual groups because of their position in the production process and the external labour market' (Price 1983:177-78). In the case studies no industrial action occurred during the period of research but the survey showed that non-manual workers do possess quite a wide range of sanctions, although, as Price concluded, these differ in kind from those employed by manual workers.

In summary, this section has explained why the character of non-manual and manual unions is essentially similar. It has shown that union organisation, the organisation of work and workers' consciousness of collective interests are important criteria to be included in the analysis of union character. Non-manual workers in the case studies were employed in an essentially co-operative work situation. They worked at a variety of tasks, had varied experiences and faced different futures. Nevertheless, the organisation of work meant that they were organised in terms of interdependence and co-operation. Their collective interests provided the basis for their collective organisations. On each occasion the non-manual workers in this study were involved in trade union activity they were engaged in a struggle with the employing organisation over their conditions of employment. That is, they acted to limit the employers' control. This limited challenge, although not recognised by the class theorists, is an important factor in the discussion of union organisation and policies in the next section.

Union Organisations and Policies

The question of the relations between unions and their members is closely linked to that of union democracy. The most popular academic theory of union government is the 'iron law of oligarchy' expounded by Michels (1959). There is a good deal of evidence to suggest that there is a low level of participation by union members in decision-making but by itself that does not constitute oligarchy (Goldstein 1952; Moran 1974; Boraston et al 1975; Batstone et al

1977). 'An oligarchy exists only if leaders are willing to exploit the opportunities created by apathy and have the power to do so' (Clegg 1979:201). In order to prevent this from happening, a mechanism is required for ensuring that union officials are representative. Much of the debate surrounding the relationship between manual workplace organisations and wider unions has focussed upon the dichotomy between bureaucracy and rank and file. The representative hierarchy and influential activists at workplace level can be seen to mediate between the bureaucracy and rank and file. This 'bureaucratisation of the rank and file' has been criticised as a move to incorporate workplace leaders (Hyman 1979; Willman 1980; Terry 1983). However, in this research it has been seen as a positive move towards a more effective non-manual unionism where representatives can articulate the requirements of their members to both management and the wider unions and strategic issues can be better handled.

Trade union representation

Because of the low level of attendance at union meetings, the 'ordinary' members know few people outside their own departments and little about what occurs in their local union organisation. Although not strongly identifying with the union, many workers in the case studies wanted to vote in elections. But the problem for members who want to participate occasionally but who do not want to attend meetings, is how can they get information about the workplace organisation's activities ? The answer to this is the key to understanding union organisations and policies.

In all of the workplace unions in the case studies a type of political representation had evolved. The first level of participation in the union was the representatives' committee where in some cases positions were unfilled because of lack of interest, but there were always people who wanted to fill the position of senior representative. In order to get to these senior positions, especially in the larger workplaces, the candidates needed support from a whole range of members in the establishment. These senior representatives were involved in the political life of the workplace organisation. Many had ambitions to sit on their national executive. They dominated the committees, in some cases attended union conferences and were the most influential members of the local union.

The position of branch secretary (or equivalent) is a fundamental one in the politics of the organisation. These individuals are members of groups and at election time try to get the candidates in their groups elected. Because of the broad support they command in their departments and the apathy of the rank and file, they have tremendous influence with the members and can often swing a large number of votes to the group that they support. Coalitions of senior representatives and other representatives with influence in the departments, therefore, can 'deliver the vote' across the establishment.

In establishments as large as those of telecommunications, motor parts and the local authority, there are only two practical representative systems that can function. Either there is an

oligarchical system, or there is a system of competing coalitions of activists who have support in various departments. The motor parts senior representative had continued to hold this position from the mid-1970s because he had the broad support of members and management across the establishment and no individual could generate the voting strength to challenge him. When the leading groups in telecommunications and the local authority began to gain strength, it was clear to them that the way to gain voting power in the workplace union was by getting members of their groups into positions of influence in the organisation. Once they had achieved this they could generate enough votes to make a bid for power.

This is achieved by having a certain ideological perspective that attracts the departmental representatives and also by giving them different types of concessions. The representative systems in workplace unions have complex mutual obligations. The groups are coalitions of people with influence in departments who together can win support across the establishment. The system may be far from ideal, but it is responsive to the membership. Demands flow from the members, via the representatives and groups to the decision-making bodies of the workplace organisation. The senior representatives respond because they need to maintain the strengths of their groups and the voting power of the department.

Even when the ideological nature of groups is not apparent, this system of institutionalised opposition, using groups as an election tool, exists. The reason is simply that the organisation of non-manual workplace unions, like that of manual unions, makes groups

the only route to power. Power within the groups is a complex social process. Power brokers, who have influence over other group members, exist, especially in the larger organisations. An elected position is not necessarily a guarantee that an individual will be a dominant force in a group. One individual who held the position of branch organiser for almost ten years had little influence within his group, but he was supported in his position because he drew a strong vote from the establishment. It is clear then that although the groups are part of organisations where there is meaningful participation by members, there are individuals and small factions within the groups who have greater power than others.

Representatives, members and policies

Workplace representatives spend time bargaining with managers about a wide range of issues: from annual pay negotiations (in the private sector) that affect every member, to grievance handling involving individual members. In these instances representatives are unambiguously representing their workplace union, although the form of their representation differs widely from one representative to another. A comparison of two case studies illustrates that representatives have very different views about the scope of trade union goals. There was a striking difference between the activities of the senior representatives in telecommunications and the senior representative in motor parts. The former had a broad view of the scope of trade union goals and policies. For them union goals included policies directed toward limiting managerial control.

Moreover, in terms of their relationship with their membership these representatives were in a position and were willing to encourage involvement of members in trade union activity. In contrast, the senior representative in motor parts was more equivocal about policies to limit managerial control. To a certain extent the case study showed that he was less likely to be in a position to encourage involvement of the membership, although the members' attitudes towards trade unionism were also important here.

Where workers have an interest in obtaining some measure of influence over their work, the union can provide an important means to realise this interest. Participation by representatives on the joint new technology committee at the metals technology centre was, at one and the same time, institutional recognition of past relationships and the promise of future ones. Despite feelings of ambiguity about this committee, representatives nevertheless took part in it since participation constituted, on the one hand, an organisational acknowledgement of the scope of union goals and policies and on the other hand, an institutional interest of management in achieving change. The company had an interest in introducing certain potentially unpopular changes in working practices. Tacit support for these changes was obtained by having union representatives on the committee. But participation also meant that union representatives had some measure of influence over technical change and that matters for union policies were more clearly delineated than previously.

The evidence from this research contradicts much of the theory of both oligarchy and incorporation. Not only is the 'iron law of oligarchy' invalid when judged by the evidence from the majority of the case studies, but institutionalised opposition is very apparent. An even more striking conclusion is that some of the organisational features that theorists have assumed sustain oligarchy in fact appear to sustain a representative system of institutionalised opposition. The large size of the workplace unions and lack of involvement by members are the main factors that have led to a representative system that has sustained various groups.

Workplace organisation provides workers with the means to act as a potentially antagonistic collectivity *vis-à-vis* management, although rejection of employers' control is far from total. Representatives in many different ways provide union members with the rhetoric and rationale for trade union activity. This is important since many members are reluctant to participate in trade unionism although they have the opportunity to do so. Representatives through their activities encourage participation and respond to members' requests for assistance. Sometimes representatives initiate policies on behalf of members. Some (especially the senior representatives) participate in bargaining with management and meet with members about these negotiations. In this variety of ways representatives act to increase members' willingness to participate in trade unionism by defining the scope of union goals and policies. However, this does not mean that union activity will necessarily occur since members also require a consciousness of their collective interests.

A central theme in this study has been that the collective interests of workers can be identified within the work situation. Workers are organised in terms of division of labour and their action is comprehensible in terms of these interests. Changes in the organisation of work have meant that non-manual workers are able to identify their collective interests in terms of the immediate conditions of work. This is an area turned to now in the final section.

Job Control and Work Organisation

Two of the central debates on the labour process in recent years have concerned work organisation and skills and managerial control strategies (for example, Braverman 1974; Friedman 1977; R. Edwards 1979; Kelly 1982). The examination of the effects of technical change on job design in this research does not indicate straightforward deskilling. This evidence qualifies the view that deskilling is a basic tendency of capitalist production. These qualifications rest on distinctions between the deskilling of jobs themselves and the acquisition of new skills and a wider intellectual grasp of work processes.

The related debate on managerial control strategies focusses upon two questions: the degree to which there is a discernible, conscious managerial strategy and the extent to which scientific management is representative of such strategies. It appears from recent debates and research that the answers to these questions share some common ground. Managerial strategies are seldom a coherent

derivation from the 'objectives of capital'. To secure control of labour and other resources and markets, management has to utilise a variety of techniques. This research shows that this was facilitated by a restructuring of technology and markets which, as Rose and Jones (1985) found, did not translate automatically into predictable movements in the frontier of control within workplaces. Indeed, one of the more interesting and important findings of this research was that technical change can enhance the power of some occupational groups.

Polarisation of skill

The major effect of technical change observed in the case studies was the polarisation of skill. The general pattern was one of deskilled clerical and administrative workers and enhanced skills for technical workers. The move towards 'multi-skilled' and 'flexible' craft workers in industry is well documented (see Cross 1985). At first sight, the enhancement of technical skills and increased autonomy appears to contradict the deskilling thesis. However, the polarisation of labour into a highly skilled minority and an unskilled majority can fulfil an important role for management. The highly skilled technical worker may become 'privileged' labour incorporated into the managerial function as part of a 'divide and rule' strategy. There are also indications of a tendency in the organisation of technical work towards the separation of mental and manual skills. Further to this, as the micro-electronics-based technologies become cheaper and more sophisticated, fault diagnosis equipment will probably become more

widespread. The maintenance function cannot, therefore, be considered immune from the deskilling effects of technology.

The important point about the polarisation and reduction of skill is that it is negotiable. The discussion of the role of managerial choice in Chapter 7 has illustrated the array of possibilities opened up by any given technology. Technology cannot be considered socially neutral. The effects are not determined by the technology alone. However, the unions' approach is one of 'conditional acceptance'. A view which is underpinned by the 'fundamental fact that most unions accept technology as an unproblematic, socially neutral phenomenon' (Robins and Webster 1982:12).

The most interesting issues brought to light by the case studies, those of skills and control, were never bargained over in the traditional sense. Rather, the tendency was for working practices to become established during the implementation of changes and then to be re-negotiated. The assumptions and interests of the various parties to the changes and their particular positions of power within the organisations were shown to determine outcomes, but rarely was this process of bargaining and accommodation made explicit. The co-ordination of workers' strategies for control was particularly weak and worker initiatives remained largely at an individual level.

Thus, the non-neutrality of technology attacks labour on two fronts. Firstly, through the polarisation of skill which divides the

workforce and secondly, to some extent through this polarisation, by the reduction of union power. Both of these can cause inter-union conflict as some unions' numerical strength is diminished as jobs are displaced. Strategically important tasks are being automated, removing one of the keys to effective union action. Individual workers are becoming physically isolated, reducing the collective spirit of the workforce and making communication difficult for unions (see, for example, Thompson and Bannon 1985). There can thus be no guarantee that the bargaining relationships demonstrated in the case studies will remain unaltered. The effects of new technology on skills, professionalism, work group cohesiveness, workforce capacity to identify and meet with each other on a common basis alter fundamentally the potential to participate in the workplace organisation and this is of crucial importance for the unions.

Union policy implications

At the national level, the trade unions in the case studies had recognised the need to form policies to deal with the effects of technical change. However, negotiations through new technology agreements had tended to focus upon issues of payment, redundancy, health and safety and so on. If unions are to come to terms with the issues of skills and control a major redirection of trade union concerns will be necessary. There is, of course, great difficulty in getting new stances on changes adopted where it counts; in the workplace organisations within individual employing organisations. But this is the only place where effective bargaining on the issues

can take place. The pattern of non-manual workplace organisation identified in the survey and case studies could be used to advantage and the task at hand for the trade unions is to secure effective workplace representative involvement. A more critical stance on the part of the unions would result in them seeking negotiations at the earliest possible stage. Early involvement is vital if the unions are to have any influence over the form of technology. However, such involvement requires information about the employing organisation's future plans and design options.

Although they contain a number of weaknesses new technology agreements are a reasonable attempt to secure change by agreement. However, they cannot be considered an effective union response to new technology for three reasons. Firstly, the political and economic climate allows managements, if they choose, to avoid negotiating technical change. However 'watertight' the model, some issues may not be negotiated. Secondly, the unions' analysis of technical change under-estimates its longer-term impact. In particular, this leads to a concentration upon the effects of the recession, rather than the content of jobs and hence a lack of appreciation of the effect of technical change on union bargaining power. This in turn means that the proposed solution (new technology agreements) fails to recognise how technology bargaining has to build upon an existing situation. If not, the model agreement, however desirable, has little hope of being achieved. Finally, the unions under-estimate the resource requirements for the successful negotiation of collective agreements which encroach upon the managerial prerogative.

In the case studies the main reason for the union representatives' inability to develop a critical approach to the introduction of new technology was lack of information on the potential for changes in the working environment. Secondary to this, but still very important, was the lack of support from the wider unions. Quite simply, the national bodies' policies were not transmitted to the workplace level. As such, much of the blame for the failure of new technology agreements has to be directed at the wider unions. Model agreements and policies have been drawn up, but the process has been left there. Continual research on agreements signed, systems installed and their effects could have been carried out and 'bulletins' circulated to keep representatives abreast of the situation. Much of the information is available in academic publications, a relatively inaccessible form. The wider unions have a need to summarise and circulate it. Policies could then be adapted and revised in the light of particular circumstances.

The failure to do this is not simply a lack of will on the part of the wider organisations. There is the obvious problem of a lack of finance to support such activity. But perhaps more importantly there are other constraints on the unions and limitations on union action. As Thompson and Bannon concluded:

> *The underlying factor [in the limited success of new technology agreements] is a failure to translate principles into effective bargaining and organisation at plant and company level. Frequently, general strategies on how to deal with new technology run counter to defensive and reactive practices which unions themselves have fostered or tolerated. This is accentuated by the inability of national union structures to shape their broad perspectives into local bargaining policies appropriate for specific conditions (1985:131-32).*

Thus there is a need for a change in the emphasis of the wider unions' activity. If trade unions are going to be suitably equipped to negotiate in strategic areas on an equivalent level to management the research and information required will be substantial (see Levie et al 1984). Following the lead of the manual trade unions, structural developments at the workplace such as representatives' combine committees could be encouraged by the wider unions. Such organisations could act as a major communication channel for the unions' research efforts.

The major conclusion to be drawn from this discussion is that the current trade union strategy of 'bargained acceptance' is inadequate. New technology agreements contain laudable objectives. However, as the sole strategy for achieving these objectives, the agreements are severely deficient. The most fundamental reason for this is the unions' failure to adopt a critical stance towards technology. Their treatment of technology as a socially neutral phenomenon has resulted in concentrating upon the distribution of the benefits of the new technology rather than the changes which accompany it. The impact of this non-neutrality upon bargaining is a shift in management-union power relations. The outcome is that workplace organisations bargain to try to secure the benefits of any change after it has taken place.

It is thus important for the unions to review their response to technical change so that a greater influence can be secured in subsequent developments. There are three major revisions required. Firstly, the unions' analysis of technical change needs to be altered

towards a much stronger commitment to negotiation at an early stage and negotiation over the form of the technology. Secondly, as workplace organisations take a greater role in bargaining and the issues become more complex, the 'servicing' activities required from the wider unions will continue to escalate. Thirdly, and probably most importantly, these two changes cannot deal with the fundamentally long term problem for the unions of encroaching into the managerial prerogative. It is unlikely that extensions of bargaining structures and procedures can adequately deal with strategic issues such as technical change. Effective negotiation for unions over the form of technology, for example, will require full knowledge of company plans and the technical options available to management. There is little chance that this information can be secured without legislation on an extension of industrial democracy. This will require a further shift in emphasis on the part of the unions away from a defensive, reactive role towards a more positive, innovatory one. While a loss of power and influence may force the unions even further back into their negative stance (reactive, economistic and sectionalist), nonetheless the positive reality is that an enhanced collective consciousness and response has developed on the part of many of those non-manual workers who have been through the experience of technical change in the recession.

In conclusion, this study has shown that non-manual workplace trade unionism provides a limited challenge to employers' power and control. It firmly rejects the views of those who claim that trade union organisation and character are a potential for class action and that union activity can have far-reaching social consequences.

If this were to happen (an unlikely development in the foreseeable future) it would depend upon fundamental changes in trade union organisation and the organisation of work, and a radical shift in the consciousness workers have of their collective interests, involving workers in many occupations and industries and posing a general challenge to the organisation of control and the exercise of power.

It is more realistic to suppose, on the evidence of this study, that the challenge by non-manual workers and their workplace unions will continue to be made, albeit limited in scope. But the fact that such a collective response, which has been a distinctive feature of British workplace industrial relations for manual workers, has been developed and maintained in a harsh economic and political climate, represents a significant advance in the history of non-manual trade unionism.

Appendix I

Workplace Industrial Relations Survey: Schedule of Questions

This appendix contains details of the questions used in the survey interviews which have been analysed and discussed in the text in Chapter 5. The full management and workers representatives' questionnaires are obtainable from the Policy Studies Institute or the ESRC Data Archive.

The establishment

What is the main activity of this establishment ? Manufacturing; Non-manufacturing.

What is the formal status of this establishment (or the organisation of which it is part) ? Limited company (Private or Public); Partnership/Self proprietorship; Trust/Company limited by guarantee; Co-operative; Public Corporation (Trading)/Nationalised industry. Quasi-autonomous National Governmental Organisation (QUANGO); Local/Central Government (inc.NHS and Local Education Authorities); Other (Specify).

Is this establishment a single independent establishment or one of several belonging to the same organisation or group within the UK ? Single establishment; Part of a multi-establishment group; Other answer (Specify).

If a single establishment: what is the total number of full-time employees at this establishment ?

What is the total number of part-time employees ?

Taking both full-time and part-time together, what is the total number of non-manual employees ?

If part of a multi-establishment group: what is the name of that organisation ? Where is the (UK) head office of that organisation ? What are the main activities of the organisation ? What is the total number of employees, in the UK, of that organisation ?

Are any of these other establishments located at this address ? If yes: how many ? Yes; No.

Union organisation

How many unions are there that have members among the non-manual employees of this establishment ?

Which unions are these ?

Which of the unions has the largest non-manual worker membership ?

What proportion of the total non-manual worker membership does that largest union have ?

Are any of these unions recognised by management for negotiating pay and conditions for any section or sections of the non-manual workforce in this establishment ? Yes; No.

Which ones ?

In this establishment as a whole are any non-manual representatives acting as senior representatives ? Yes; No.

Are they acknowledged by management as such ? Yes; No.

How many senior representatives are there ?

In practice, do any of these senior representatives work full-time, that is spending all or nearly all of their working time on union matters here ? Yes; No.

If yes: how many such full-time representatives are there ?

For how long have there been such representatives in this establishment ? Less than 3 years; 3 years/less than 5 years; 5 years/less than 10 years; 10 years or over.

If no: is there one senior non-manual representative who spends more time than others on union affairs concerning this establishment ? Yes; No; Other answer.

If yes: on average how many hours per week does (s)he spend on union matters here ? Under 5 hours; 5-10 hours; 11-15 hours; More than 16 hours.

If more than one union is listed: do you have a committee of non-manual representatives which includes some representatives from your own union and some from other non-manual unions ? Yes; No; Other answer.

How frequently does this committee meet ? Once every month or more often; Less often but at least once every 3 months; Less often but at least once every 6 months; Less often but at least once a year; Other answer.

Are these meetings held in working hours ? Yes, always; Yes, sometimes; No.

Does this committee have: A written constitution; Standing orders; A minute book ? Yes; No.

Which unions are represented on the present committee ?

Apart from this committee do you have meetings of representatives from your own union and representatives of other non-manual unions in this establishment ? Yes; No.

How frequently do meetings of this sort occur ? Once very month or more often; Less often but at least once every 3 months; Less often but at least once every 6 months; Less often but at least once a year; Other answer.

Are these meetings held in working hours ? Yes, always; Yes, sometimes; No; Other answer.

Are minutes taken at these meetings ? Very frequently; Quite frequently; Not at all frequently; No, not at all.

Are there meetings of representatives from your own union only, apart from branch meetings ? Yes; No.

If yes: how frequently are these meetings held ? Once every month or more often; Less often but at least once every 3 months; Less often but at least once every 6 months; Less often but at least once a year; Other answer.

Are these meetings held in working hours ? Yes, always; Yes, sometimes; No.

Are minutes taken at these meetings ? Very frequently; Quite frequently; Not at all frequently; No, not at all.

If establishment is part of a multi-establishment organisation: do you have meetings between the non-manual representatives here and the non-manual representatives in other establishments of this organisation (excluding branch meetings) ? Yes; No.

If yes: how often are these meetings held ? Once every month or more often; Less often but at least once every 3 months; Less often but at least once every 6 months; Less often but at least once a year.

Do you go to these meetings ? Yes; No.

For how long have these meetings been taking place ? Less than 3 years; 3 years/less than 5 years; 5 years/less than 10 years; 10 years or more.

Why was it decided to start these meetings ?

Have you found any difficulties in organising these meetings ?

Has management (at this establishment) given any financial help towards setting up and running these meetings ? Yes; No.

If yes: what form did this help take ? Travel costs; Accommodation; Administration/photo-copying/printing; Other.

Are there meetings between representatives of non-manual unions in this establishment and those in other organisations (i.e. working for other employers) ? Yes; No.

How often are these meetings held ? Once every month or more often; Less often but at least once every 3 months; Less often but at least every 6 months; Less often but at least once a year.

Do you go to these meetings ? Yes; No.

For how long have these meetings been taking place ? Less than 3 years; 3 years/less than 5 years; 5 years/less than 10 years; 10 years or more.

Why was it decided to start these meetings ?

Have you found any difficulties in organising these meetings ?

Has management (at this establishment) given any financial help setting up and running these meetings ? Yes; No.

What form did this take ? Travel costs; Accommodation; Administration/photo-copying/printing; Other.

Who elects the senior representatives in your union ? Your own union; All unions (including other unions); Your own union representatives; All representatives; Other answer.

How are they elected ? Show of hands; Postal ballot; Non postal ballot; Other method.

Do senior representatives in practice have to stand for re-election ? Yes; No; Other answer.

If yes: how often ? Every year; Every other year; Other answer.

In the last year have there been elections for senior representatives in your union ? Yes; No.

If yes: did two or more candidates stand for the same post on any occasion in the last year ? On all occasions; On most occasions; On some occasions; Very few occasions; Never.

Do senior representatives technically have to stand for re-election ? Yes; No.

Do senior representatives in your union represent members in this establishment belonging to other unions ? Yes; No; Other answer.

How many members do you personally represent here ? Under 50; 51-100; 101-150; 151 or more.

How are representatives other than senior, elected in your union ? Show of hands; Postal Ballot; Non postal ballot.

In practice do representatives in your union have to stand for re-election ? Yes; No; Other answer.

If yes: how often ? Every year; Every 2 years; Other interval.

In the last year have there been elections for representatives in your union ? Yes; No.

If yes: did two or more candidates stand for the same post ? On all occasions; On most occasions; On some occasions; Very few occasions; Never.

Do representatives in your union technically have to stand for re-election ? Yes; No; Other answer.

Apart from senior representatives, do representatives in your union ever represent members belonging to other non-manual unions ? Yes; No; Other answer.

In the last year have any representatives here in your union (including yourself) held any other positions in the union ? Yes; No.

If yes: which ? Delegate to Policy Making Conference; Delegate to Rules Revision Conference; Branch Committee member, Secretary, Chairman; District Committee member, Secretary, Chairman; Area, regional, divisional committee; Representative on top governing body; Other.

In this establishment as a whole, how many non-manual representatives are there, apart from any concerned exclusively with Health and Safety matters ? Include representatives in the total.

In the last year, did representatives, including senior ones, from all the non-manual unions leave the establishment, resign or give up office for any reason ? How many ? Yes; None.

In the last year, did any representatives including senior representatives from the non-manual unions take up office as replacements for previous representatives ? How many ? Yes; None.

At the present time, have any representatives from the non-manual unions held office for over 5 years ? How many ? Yes; None.

What does the branch consist of ? Members of this establishment only; Members of this establishment and other establishments - same employer; Members of this establishment and other establishments - other employer; Members of this establishment, other establishments of same employer, and other establishments of a different employer.

Are meetings of the branch held: At this place of work; At another place of work belonging to the same employer; Somewhere else ?

Are meetings held during or at the end of the working day ? During working day; End of working day; Other answer.

How many members in total are there in the branch ?

During the last year, how many members attended branch meetings, generally ?

During the last year how many times did your branch meet ?

How often have you attended in the past year ? Not at all; Once or twice; 3-5 times; 6-10 times; 11-19 times; 20+ times.

To what extent do you depend on branch meetings for meeting other representatives in this establishment ? A great deal; Quite a lot; Not very much; Not at all.

During the last year, did you meet with a full-time official of your union to discuss matters affecting the staff you represent ? If yes, how often ? No, not at all; Once; Twice; 3-4 times; 5-9 times; 10 or more times.

During the last year, did you and the local full-time official of your union meet with management to discuss matters affecting the staff you represent ? If yes, how often ? No, not at all; Once; Twice; 3-4 times; 5-9 times; 10 or more times.

During the last year have you contacted your national official or your union head office about matters affecting the staff you represent ? Yes; No; Other answer.

Collective bargaining

At which levels are there negotiations between the unions and the employers which either form the basis for subsequent negotiations, or directly result in pay increases for your group of staff ?

On the last occasion of a pay increase for your group of staff, which level would you say was the most important ? National/industry-wide/more than 1 employer; Region/district/more than 1 employer; This employer/organisation/all establishments; This employer/organisation/some establishments; This establishment/plant; Statutory Wages Council; No negotiations/employer decides; Other.

Before the final agreement on this last increase was reached, were there consultations with the members or representatives in your negotiating group ? Yes members including representatives; Yes representatives only; No consultations; Other answer.

If yes: what form did these consultations take ? Postal ballot; Ballot/non-postal; Show of hands; Other answer.

How are these issues dealt with here ? Negotiated (establishment); Negotiated (elsewhere); Not negotiated:- Holiday entitlement; Length of working week; Pensions; Physical working conditions; Recruitment; Redeployment; Redundancy; Staffing levels; Major changes in production methods; Capital investment.

Collective conflict

Have any forms of industrial action taken place among the non-manual workers in this establishment during the last 12 months ? Yes; No.

If yes: which ?

On how many occasions in the last 12 months ? Strikes of less than one day/whole shift; Strikes of one day/shift or more; Ban or restriction on overtime; Work to rule; Lock out; Go slow; Blacking of work; Work in/sit in; Other industrial action.

Now I would like to ask you about the most recent strike/other industrial dispute at this establishment.

What was this action ? Strike; Overtime ban; Work to rule; Lock out; Go slow; Blacking; Work in/sit in; Other.

How many employees took part ?

When did it begin ?

How many working days did it last ?

Were these days consecutive working days or intermittent ?
Consecutive; Intermittent.

What would you say was the reason for the action ? Most recent strike ? Most recent other industrial dispute ?

Appendix II

Interview Schedule: Subjects for Discussion

The establishment (senior management representative)

What is the main activity of this establishment ?

Is this establishment in the private or public sector ? Foreign or UK owned ?

Is it the only establishment in the UK owned by the employing organisation ?

How many people in total (full-time and part-time) are employed in this establishment ?

How many of these are: Male non-manual workers ? Female non-manual workers ? Part-time non-manual workers ?

How many workers (full-time and part-time) were employed in this establishment five years ago ?

Over the last five years, has the output of this establishment: Risen ? Fallen ? Not changed ?

Which types of production or technology are used in this establishment ?

Union organisation (senior representative)

How many members does your union have in this establishment ?

How many unions, including your own, represent non-manual workers here ?

In this establishment, how many non-manual representatives are there who are: Members of your union ? Members of any non-manual union including your own ?

How many senior representatives are there from: Your union ? All non-manual unions ?

How many representatives work more or less full-time on workplace union matters who are from: Your union ? All non-manual unions ?

Who elects the senior representatives in: Your union ? All non-manual unions ?

What does your union branch consist of ?

Where are branch meetings held ?

How many members are there in the branch ?

Do you have a committee of non-manual representatives which includes some representatives from your own union and some from other non-manual unions ?

How frequently does it meet ?

Apart from this committee, do you have meetings of representatives from your union and representatives from other unions in this establishment ?

How frequently do meetings of this kind occur ?

Are there meetings of representatives from your union only, apart from branch meetings ?

How frequently do meetings of this kind occur ?

Do you have meetings between the non-manual representatives here and the non-manual representatives in other establishments of this organisation (excluding branch meetings) ?

How frequently do meetings of this kind occur ?

What facilities do the non-manual union representatives have in this establishment ?

Are these facilities the subject of a written agreement between management and your union ?

Representative activities (all workplace representatives)

In what circumstances did you first become a representative ?

How many members do you represent ?

What are the highest and lowest grades you represent ?

How do you generally communicate with your members ?

In practice, do you have to stand for re-election ?

When standing for re-election are you opposed ?

Do you hold any other positions in the union ?

On average, how many hours a week do you spend on union matters ?

What activities take up most of your time as a union representative ?

Industrial relations (all workplace representatives)

Do the representatives of all the unions in this establishment negotiate jointly with management about pay and conditions or are there separate negotiations with different unions or different groups of unions ?

At which of the following levels of negotiation is pay settled for your members ? Negotiations involving more than one employer; This employer only, covering more than one establishment; This establishment only; No negotiations - employer decides.

As far as your members in this establishment are concerned, at what levels are issues related to the following negotiated ? Holiday entitlement; Length of working week; Pensions; Physical working conditions; Recruitment; Redeployment; Redundancy; Staffing levels; Changes in production methods; Capital investment.

Are there formal procedures in this establishment for dealing with: Disputes over pay and conditions ? Discipline and dismissals ? Individual grievances ?

In practice, are these procedures used ?

Over the last five years has management reduced the non-manual workforce ?

Over the last five years have there been negotiations leading to changes in working practices ?

Over the last five years has management made more or less use of the following in this establishment ? Part-time labour; Sub-contract labour; Casual labour; Contracting work out; Overtime; Shift working.

Over the last five years has management made more or less use of the following in this establishment ? Individual payment; Group-based payment; Establishment or company bonus; Work study; Job evaluation; Quality circles; Briefing groups; Formal consultation with union representatives (other than on health and safety).

Have any forms of industrial action occurred during the last 12 months in this establishment ?

Technical change (all workplace representatives)

During the last five years has there been technical change in this establishment which affected groups covered by your union ?

In what areas have these changes occurred ?

What have been the major effects of the changes for your members ? Grading; Skill; Responsibility; Flexibility; Overtime; Health and safety; Demarcations.

Were there any negotiations on issues relating to the technical change ?

On which issues ?

To what extent were there disagreements between management and your union on matters relating to these changes ?

On which issues ?

Were there any consultations on issues relating to the technical change ?

On which issues ?

What reasons did management give for introducing these changes ?

Does your union have a 'new technology' agreement with management ?

What does the agreement cover ?

Has technical change affected union organisation at this establishment ?

In what way ?

Relations with the wider union (full-time official)

What are your main union responsibilities and activities ?

During the last year, did you meet with a representative of the workplace organisation to discuss matters affecting the workers you represent ?

How often ?

During the last year, did you and a representative of the workplace organisation meet with management to discuss matters affecting the workers you represent ?

How often ?

Management of industrial relations (management representative)

What are your main responsibilities and activities ?

How much discretion would you say that management at this establishment has over industrial relations matters generally ?

Over the last five years would you say the amount of discretion allowed to management here has: Increased ? Decreased ? Not changed ?

How satisfied are you that the management at this establishment generally: Takes heed of industrial relations policies, procedures and agreements ? Seeks appropriate advice from you or your department on industrial relations matters ? Passes on relevant information to you or your department about events here ?

How influential would you say that personnel and industrial relations considerations are in formulating policy and making decisions in this establishment or wider organisation on the following: Fixed capital investment decisions ? Major changes in production methods ? Pay and conditions of employment ? Redundancy decisions ?

What has been the most important change in the conduct of industrial relations here in the last five years ?

Have you any other comments to make about industrial relations ?

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